BLUE BOOK

An Illustrated Mag ~ March, 15 cents

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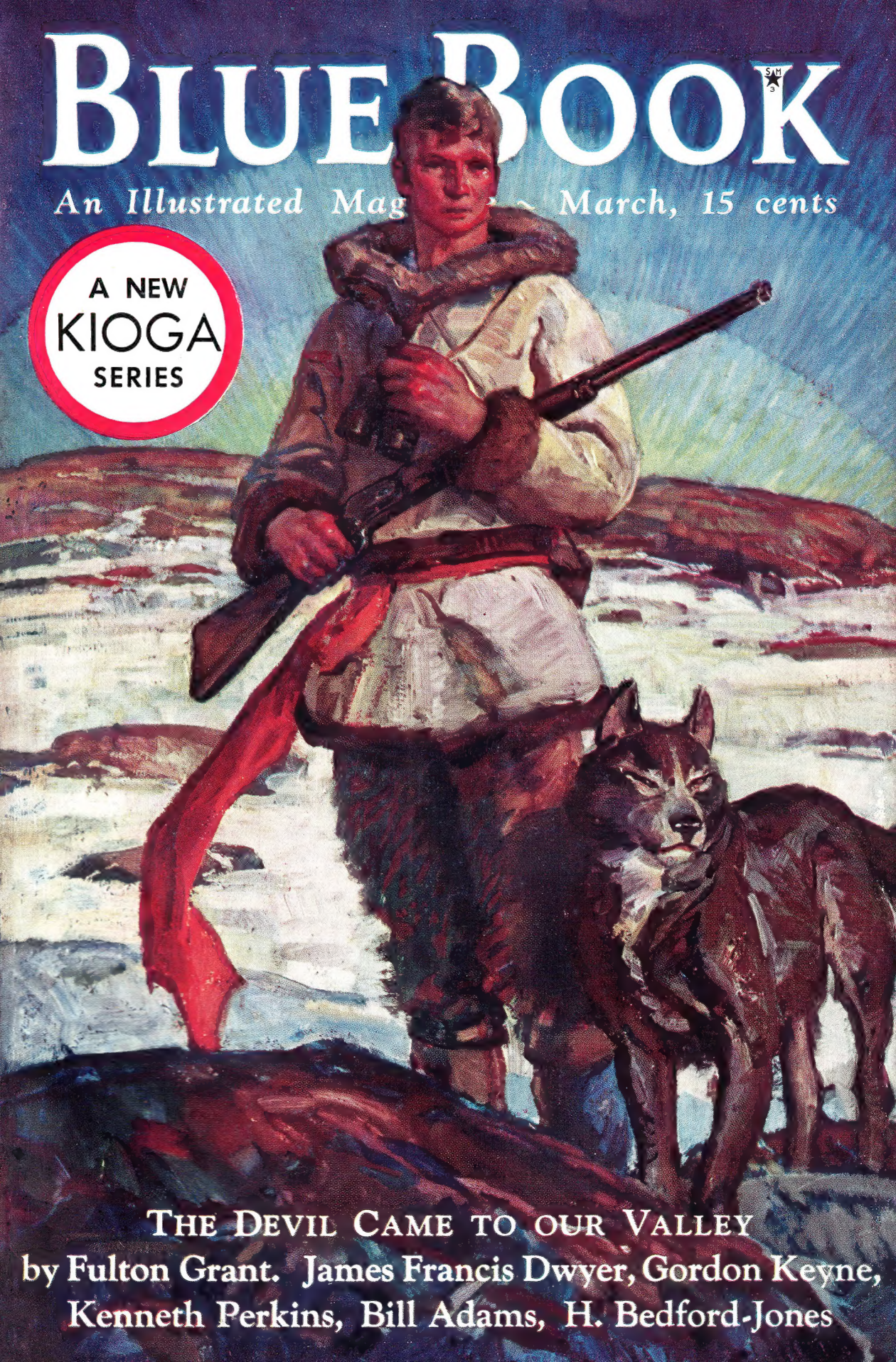


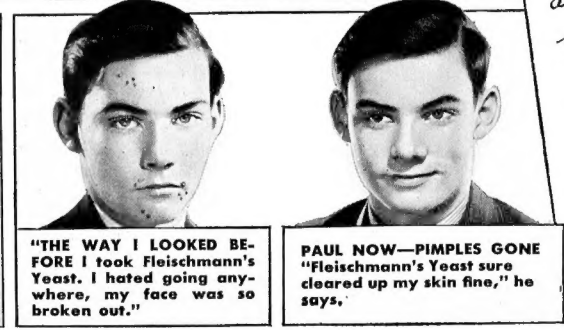
THE DEVIL CAME TO OUR VALLEY

by Fulton Grant. James Francis Dwyer, Gordon Keyne, Kenneth Perkins, Bill Adams, H. Bedford-Jones

The TRUE EXPERIENCE of PAUL SHEA

OF SPRINGFIELD, N.J.

I HATE TAKING THIS FACE ANYWHERE!



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Paul Shea

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Well of the Padres His Living Tomb

San Diego Reporter, Weak from Loss of Blood, Cheats Death in Ancient Shaft

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"But I had clung to my flashlight and as the cold water cleared my senses, I could see it shining under the surface. Paddling to keep afloat, I swung the light as best I could around the well. A rusted old pipe attached to the wall offered a hand hold, and was stout enough to hold me as I fought off growing dizziness from loss of blood, and climbed hand over hand to where my companions could reach me.

"They would have pulled a corpse out of that well if it hadn't been for the DATED Eveready batteries in my flashlight—batteries that were really *fresh* when I bought them months before. I would certainly have lost consciousness and drowned before my friends could have reached the mission (a quarter mile away) and returned with rope and a light."

E. P. Lyle III

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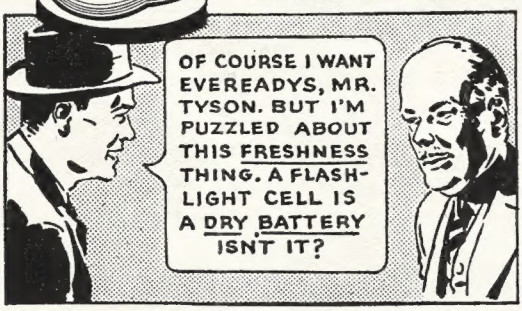

BLUE BOOK

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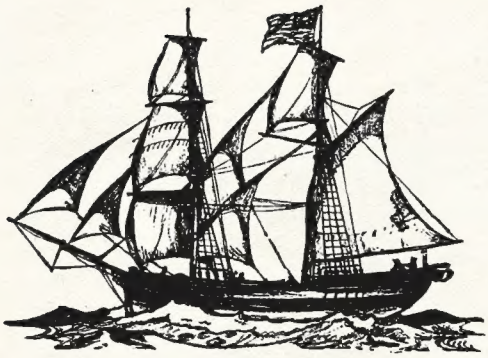

From a Sailor's Scrapbook

By COULTON WAUGH

THE brigantine was identical with the hermaphrodite brig except that in place of the triangular fore-and-aft gaff topsail on the mainmast, the brigantine swung one or two square topsails. As time went on these topsails were found to be inefficient and the gaff topsail was substituted, thus turning the rig into a hermaphrodite brig.

Many of these little ships were employed as privateers and slavers. From Newport, Rhode Island, the brigantine *Sanderson,* David Linsay, master, cleared for the slave coast in the winter of 1752. She was of forty tons burden and carried a captain, two mates, and six men. He wrote to his owners from the African Guinea coast in February: "I have gott thirteen or fourteen hhds. of rum yet left abord. God noes when I shall gett clear of it. Ye traid is so dull it is actually a noof to make a man creasy. My cheefe mate after making four or five trips in the boat was taken sick and remains very bad yett. I should be glad I cood come rite home with my slaves, for my vessiel will not last to proceed far."

However, prosperity was evidently just around the corner, for on June seventeenth we find him writing from Barbados with fifty-six slaves aboard: "All in health and fatt. I lost one small gall." He received for his slaves thirty pounds each, and after deducting duties and commission managed to show a profit of 1,324 pounds ($6,620.00). At that time the slave trade was considered legitimate and even respectable, and the profits were great although the voyages were dangerous in the extreme. In one church a respectable elder was always in the habit of returning thanks on the Sunday following a slave-ship's arrival in Newport in these words: "An overruling Providence has been pleased to bring to this land of freedom another cargo of benighted heathen to enjoy the blessing of a gospel dispensation."

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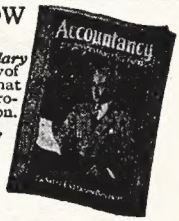

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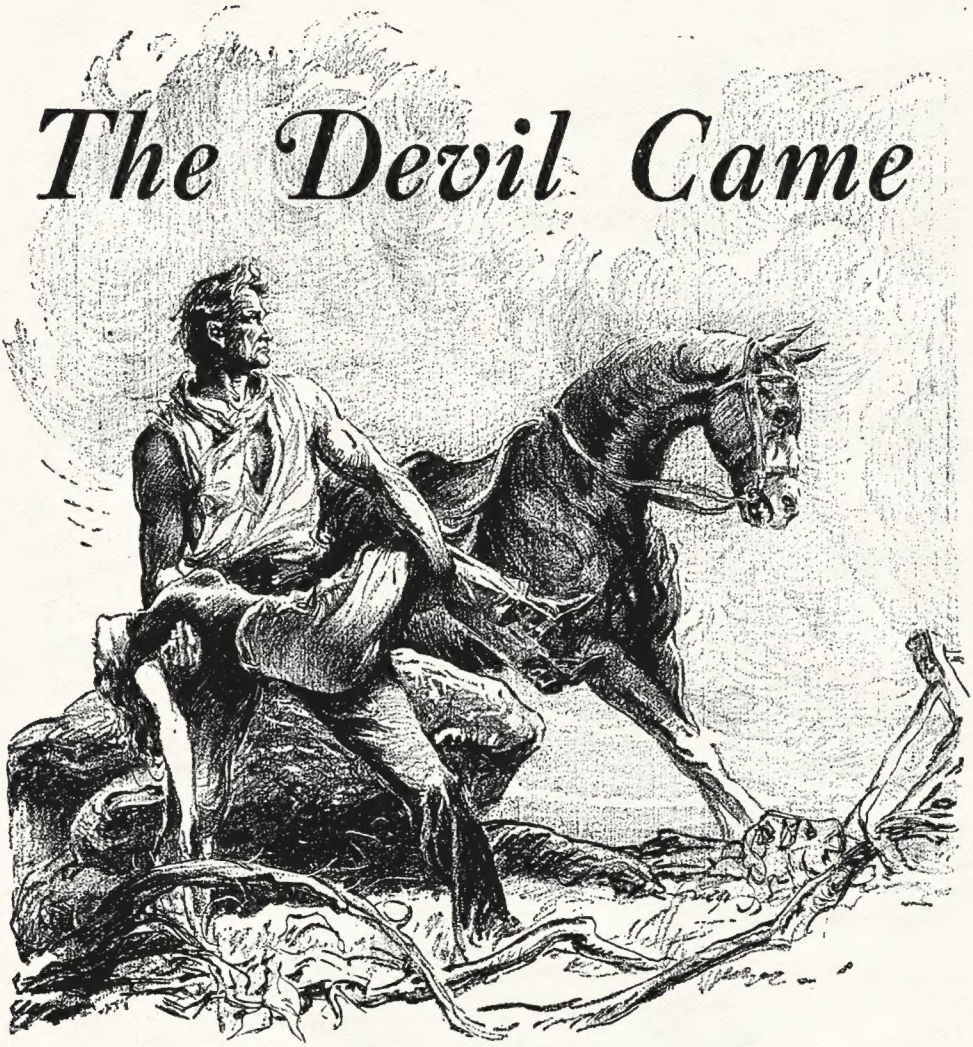
The Devil Came



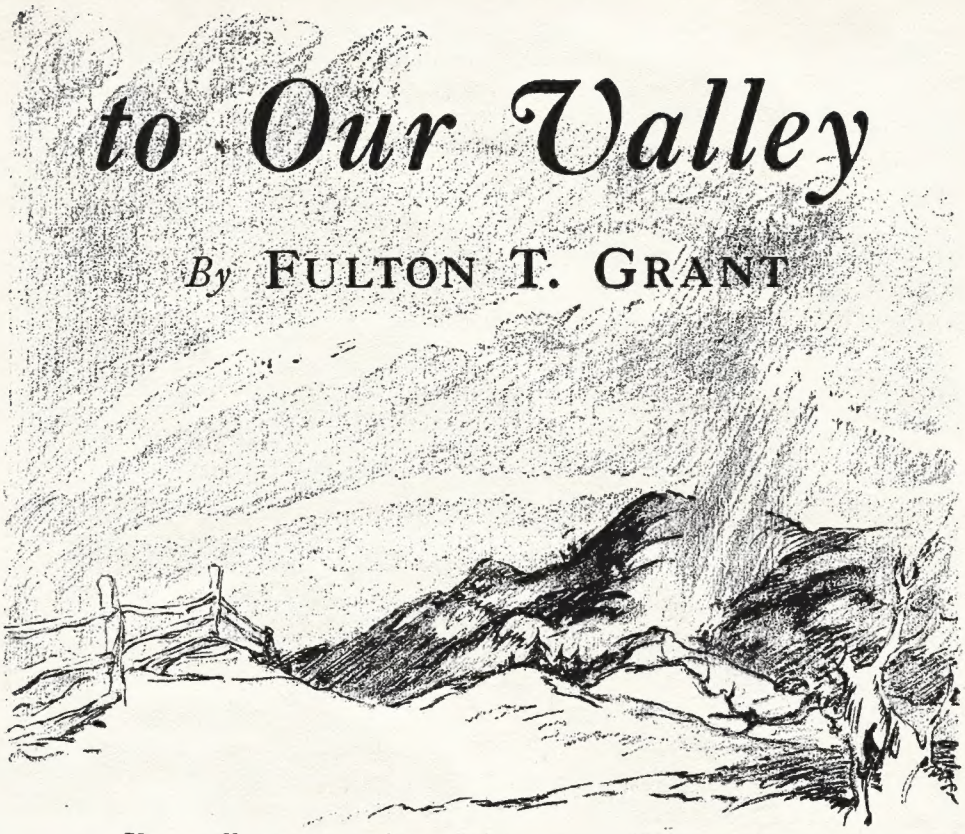
LAST night I heard the howling of the wild dogs up on the Houvenkopf; and I knew, straightway, that there was death on the mountain. A strange, queer business is the death-howl of a dog, and it borders near those things we, in our profound ignorance, label as "supernatural." But so is the Houvenkopf a strange, queer place; and so are the wild dogs themselves a queer fact; and so was the man Mawm Rukker, whose withered, tired old soul was flickering out when the dogs set up their howling, a strange and scarcely believable coëfficient of our hills.

I suppose you younger moderns will put me down as a doddering, muddle-headed old fool of a country doctor, a simple rustic, because I listened to the howling of the dogs, and because I am naïve enough to have believed in the classical or legendary interpretation of it. You'll call me eccentric, or "touched," perhaps, because I have chosen to spend most of my life up here in the Ramapo Valley—a rural medico with a large practice and small income, trying to help our little hill people, bringing children into the world for them, earning their trust and sympathizing with them, even taking their part, sometimes, against you people who haughtily call yourselves "civilized." Had I any enterprise, any decent ambition, you'll say, I might have set up offices in the city and made a fortune prescribing pills for neurotic ladies with fat bank-accounts and learning your bedside manner.

Oh, I'll admit that, my young colleagues; but that was not what I wanted. You've had it, and you're welcome; but those city people are yours, not mine. I was born among these hills, and I love them. The Houvenkopf and its strange little people have always been at my back door; and who, I ask you, would

to Our Valley

By FULTON T. GRANT



You will not soon forget this extraordinary story of a strange wild people living almost at the gates of Gotham.

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

have cared for their hundreds of ill-born, ill-nourished babies? Who would have cured their croup and their measles and their ringworms? Who would have sewn up the knife-wounds for that young devil Pilter Ared, when the Merely woman stabbed him? Who would have supplied the snake-venom for scores of rattler and copperhead bites? And who, I ask you again, would have fought for justice when the Devil came into our valley and brought poison, hatred, murder, war and tragedy among those simple, untamed, unknown primitives, the Jackson Whites?

Not you, my young diagnosticians of Park Avenue—nor the school authorities which patronized them into education, nor the self-appointed missionaries, nor the law that confuses justice with doctrine.

But the dogs have howled, and Mawm Rukker is dead; and now the story can be told without harm; for Judith, the saint, may at last come down from the mountain, scattering the embers of hate to the winds of the Valley and bringing her love and her peace.

Mawm Rukker dead? That old rascal? Who cares for Mawm Rukker? Who cares for the Jackson Whites? Who cares for a race of outcasts, living a stone's-throw from New York City, yet who have never seen a telephone? Race of hybrids, most of them, the descendants of Indians and of deserting soldiers and of African slaves! Let them die, you'll say. Life has no time for them. New York and New Jersey have no place for them. Civilization can't wait for them. Let them get civilized or die, you'll say. And Mawm Rukker—what was that story in the papers awhile back? Wasn't there a trial? Didn't he kill somebody? Or was it his son? Wasn't there a woman in it? Nasty business, wasn't it? Mawm Rukker dead? Probably a good thing, too. . . .

But wait a minute, my smart young friends, and listen to an old man's story.

DO you know our Ramapos? Do you know that world of green hills and maples and firs and mica-rock and rho-

dodendrons and tiny lakes and deer and partridge, lying on the very door-sill of Fifth Avenue, where you can drop suddenly out of a land of garish road-signs and hideous gas-stations into a quick, primitive, glorious paradise? Where the noises of industry are hushed? Where the winds are laden with soft songs of Indian lore? Where the rich black loam is bursting with a green joy?

I was born there, my young blades; and I love that country. Fifty-seven years ago I was born there, and in those days Mawm Rukker was a young man.

"Negroes," you call them? Aye, they're black enough, some of them. And there's Indian blood too. Tuscaroras, driven out of the Carolinas by settling Germans, settling in the Ramapos back in 1770 or thereabouts, and joining the Five Nations of the Iroquois. But what of the three thousand five hundred "white slaves"—women kidnaped and transported from London's slums for the Hessian mercenaries of the British army in the days when George Washington was making this country free from the absurdity of a cloddish George III? When the British were driven out of New York, those poor girls—whatever their morals, may God forgive them—were hounded into the Ramapos, to live as outcasts and to form a colony with the deserting Hessian soldiery, the Tuscaroras and a handful of black slave-girls who had been with them. There's the ancestry; put it frankly. But out of that grim background has grown, through the flux of years, a new race, primitive and strong.

"Whuch law is ut, dot take away a man his woman?" he asked.

And yet Mawm Rukker was from none of these.

I CAN remember vividly how the very name of him grew to be a symbol of something utterly fantastic in my own childhood. My father—he was "Old Doc" Borsden to all the Valley farmers—was something of a Tartar in his way. I can remember how he stormed at the frightened, waddling, slightly hysterical Abigail Ness, our "hired woman" on that day when I first heard of the Jackson Whites. Six or seven, I was then, and I had been guilty of some childhood naughtiness; Abigail, in her countrified illiterate anger, had tried to scare me into good behavior by pointing at the crag of the Houvenkopf with a warning finger and saying:

"Ye'll behave now, ye little fool, else Mawm Rukker the wild man'll come for ye with his pack o' dogs."

Quite overawed by the tone of her voice and by the forbidding denseness of the Houvenkopf's black forest, I whispered:

"Who's Mawm Rukker?"

"He's a Jack," she said. "And for aught I know, he may be the Devil himself. Surely he's king of the mountain," she added seriously. "And he has a pack of black dogs that obey him and which no bullet can touch—and he feeds bad little boys to them, too."

Properly chastened, I remember running to ask my father what it was she meant by a "Jack." Then it was that the story came out.

A stern man, my father, but a just one. A doctor, he knew well enough the harm and the futility of frightening little children into good behavior with stories of bogey-men, whether real or fancied. But there was still another feeling in him that moved him to upbraid Abigail. He summoned her to his study, and as she stood trembling there, he paced the floor while his vibrating voice ground out:

"Abigail Ness, ye'll never tell my son another yarn about the hill people, else by God not another day's work from this family will ye get—nor from any other house in the Valley, either, as long as I live. Let you understand that. Ye'll never attempt to frighten the boy into obedience and sow the seed of fear in him, and let that also be understood, woman!

"But take ye note of this: as long as I'm alive, the Jackson White people shall be respected in this house. Strange people they may be. Wild they may be, and fearsome to you. But they're humans. God made them, woman. And likely they're as good as the rest of us. And I'll have none of your housewives' gossip about them whilst you live here."

Nevertheless, as I grew older, rumors and stories of the Jackson Whites, and especially of Mawm Rukker, came to me; and indeed that man might well have been "the Devil himself" for what was said of him. Though I was already quite a lad when first I saw him, the legends that grew around the man bloomed in my child's imagination until he became to me half-god, half-ogre.

Mawm Rukker! The very name had a sound to it. What queer kind of creature would be called "Mawm Rukker?" Was it not this Mawm Rukker who had come down from the Houvenkopf into Hilburn and nearly killed five strong men in a quarrel? Had the man not run away with Bess Tisbury, that pale, handsome daughter of a pinch-penny farmer from down Saddle River way? Had he not shot the hat from Farmer Tisbury's head and the shotgun out of the hand of Tisbury's son when the two of them, indignant and wrathful, had stormed the mountain to bring the runaway girl back home again? Had he not raided a store in Oakland, stolen a sack of flour and a case of applejack, holding a whole village at bay with his deadly rifle, and laughing in the very faces of the frightened citizens? Mawm Rukker had done this; he had done that. Mawm Rukker, the fatal marksman. Mawm Rukker, the wild drunkard of the hills. Mawm Rukker, whom the black dogs, wild scourge and terror of the valley farms, obeyed like lambs! So ran the legends, making him into a fantastic, supernatural creature, sharing the identities of the pirates of old, and the highwaymen, and the noble gods of mythology in my young heart.

And then one day I saw him.

If you were born a country boy, you'll know what it is to shoulder your baby rifle and to snap 22-caliber B.B. caps at some ferocious woodchuck you have stalked as though he were some panther of the jungle. What a grim, relentless huntsman you were in your 'teens! The scrawny wood near your home abounded in 'chucks and skunks and chipmunks and squirrels and perhaps an owl or two, all of which called for your unrivaled skill and prowess as a Nimrod to exterminate them. In later years we may stalk our antelope in the Senegal or lions in the Sudan, but there is no thrill in our lives like the stalking of our first woodchuck with that ancient Flobert which Grandpa gave us for our fourteenth birthday.

And I was stalking my woodchuck. Bellied in the grass, I was, my face to the wind, the scent of clover in my nostrils and the exotic pulsation of the "jungle" (perhaps half a mile from our farmstead) pumping in my veins. So intent was I upon the fat little beast which crouched by his hole, that I did not see the sharp, grass-hidden chasm where some tree-stump had been blasted out of the ground. On I crawled. I shifted to the side for better vision—and tumbled into the pit with a frightened scream,—my rifle going off as it fell in after me,—and striking my head against a sharp rock at the bottom. Darkness swallowed me then.

WHEN I returned to consciousness, I was being carried hurriedly through the fields. Two enormous red-hairy arms held my body, and the pungent scent of wood-smoke hung over me, emanating from the man who ran with me. My head pained badly, pounding with the great, loping strides he was taking, and I could feel the steel pressure of the arms that held me so tight. I twisted around to look up into the fierce hawk features of him, and I saw the bristling thatch of red hair and the intense iron-gray eyes that peered down at me from under the hair.

And so, frightened for my life, I screamed again.

"Ha!" came the odd, foreign-seeming voice. "Soo, ut's not dead, den? Dun't screech soo. Nah, childy, yo' keep quiet whiles us run by yo' housen to Papa for feex ut wi' a bit cloth again' the blood."

Rough, the voice was, and booming, and the language was new and hard for me to make out. And the pain in my head was bad, and there was fear in me, fighting at my senses and terrifying me as I saw the huge form more clearly. The torn, faded blue shirt of him was studded with burrs, and the ragged trousers were patched with leather against the cloth, and there was a great knife sticking in the piece of rope that served him for a belt. And so, in my fear, the tears came to me.

I cried and I kicked and I struggled, but he only ran the faster, straight to our house. And when he trampled over the gray-white gravel of our driveway, he lifted his great voice and bellowed:

"Ha dere, Doc Borsden! Coom oot quick, 'cause yo' childy's bloodied on hisn haid."

My father came running.

"Hello to you, Mawm Rukker," I heard him say, and then: "Good God, man, what's the boy done to himself?"

At that fabulous name I fainted, as much from the thrill of it as from the effects of my fright.

REVIVED and bandaged, I sat up in a horsehair chair in my father's office, all a-wonder that my father should dare to converse so quietly and at his ease with this monster. Rukker was still standing,—he would never sit down indoors, I learned later,—with a bit of pipe in his mouth, and his rifle dangling from his hand, carrying the odor of pine-trees and burnt leaves into the antiseptic atmosphere of the room.

My father was saying:

"I thank ye, Mawm Rukker, for fetching the lad in. And how is your own little one? And Bess herself, how is she these days? Are they all well up on the mountain? It's near time for me to come up again now."

Rukker rumbled out:

"Mine Galeg, he is goot enough. Mine Bess, she is goot for dere's a childy comin' ag'in, which is whyen I haf coom to tell yo'. She'll haf need, maybe—"

My father dismissed me with a sign, and I carried my bandaged head away, quivering with delight and terror too, to have seen Mawm Rukker in my own house, talking with Old Doc, my father, as simply as any farmer of the Valley might have done.

YEARS passed before I saw him again, however, although my father paid a monthly visit to the mountain, and ministered to the strange little people there. They may not have loved him, but they respected him and trusted him.

It was in 1899 that I came home from the university to begin sharing my father's practice. The whole countryside was in a turmoil. The Grange was up in arms. All the farmers had inflamed themselves to a pitch of excitement and anger that is hard to imagine. The reason was—the wild dogs of the Ramapos.

Since early childhood I had heard tales of these beasts, though as I grew older I discredited them. Legendary dogs, they were—immense beyond belief, coal-black and wolflike, running in packs of shadowy phantoms, frightening travelers, appearing and disappearing like the werewolves of fable. There were stories of their fierce raids upon the livestock of the Valley farmers; and one even heard tales of hunters, venturing in the hills, only to vanish, their bones picked clean of flesh and crushed by the fangs of these terrible beasts. However, I had grown to hold such tales lightly, and it was only now that the fact of the dogs' existence became too evident for doubt.

There had been raids. Hard winter had starved the wild dogs and fanned their courage. In Oakland, in Pompton, in Wanaque and even on the outskirts of Suffern, these great black wolf-dogs had appeared in numbers, had butchered sheep and cattle, had laid waste fifty or more barnyards, and had even attacked and torn beyond surgical intervention one of the huge Percheron stallions which were the pride of farmer Tisbury, whose daughter had eloped with the wild Rukker, years before. And if there were any room now for me to doubt the tale, one of the farmers had shot and killed a wild dog, and the carcass was plainly visible to all who cared to ride over Darlington way for a look at it.

I rode and I saw, and I confess the beast was a beauty. It must have weighed nearly one hundred and seventy pounds—big as a Dane or a mastiff, but bristling with short tufted hair, and with the lean, angular muzzle of a boarhound. Coal-black, it was, but a ruff

at its neck, flecked with gray, betrayed an admixture of wolf blood.

Whence came such beasts? Wild dogs within thirty miles of the metropolis? Impossible, you say. And yet let me quote history. Back in the Revolutionary days when the Hessian soldiers, deserting from a hopeless British army, fled to these mountains and joined the outcast women, those "white slaves" herded and sold by the unmentionable Jackson, some of those German fighting men brought dogs with them. Great dogs, they were: huge black boar-hounds from Brunswick and Hesse-Cassel; soldiers' dogs, beasts of almost primeval structure and courage. In the years that followed, these monster hounds, escaping from the hovels of the colonies, or driven out by their owners, bred with wolves, and a race of doubly savage beasts was born. Mongrels, they are, but thrown upon their own skill and hardihood in finding sustenance, they grew into giants of the canine species, and their descendants even today when they have interbred again with the runaway curs of near-by towns,—with house-dogs from your backyard and mine,—are formidable plunderers, the scourge of the farms, the terror of the unwary stranger caught in the Ramapos at night.

Such, indeed, was the dog I saw.

SOME nights later as I was riding home from the Grange where farmers were planning a posse of riders to hunt and kill these monsters, I saw a light in my father's study. Entering, I found him in conversation with a tall, fierce, graying man, whom I soon recognized as Mawm Rukker. He had come to warn us. He had come down from his mountain fastness to plead with my father, since the Jacks trusted no other man in the Valley, and to warn him that if the farmers made a raid against the dogs and killed them, whole villages of Jackson Whites would defend the beasts. That meant war—five thousand or more wild men, turning their deadly rifles against the Valley.

"Ut moost no be," Rukker insisted. "Mine peoples, dey lof dem dogs. Dey had not lof for yo' peoples. De dogs, dey is starved. Ut is for eating dey coom down here. For yo' I haf coom to tell dis; butten for de odders, I haf no care. I do not want dis thing should be."

Then suddenly pleading,—pleading for the dogs in his strange half-intelligible language,—he said they were a part of his own, fugitives from civilization like his own, unwanted, hunted, hated like himself and his people. There was passion in his plea—passion and love. He told how many times he would shoot a deer and whistle for the dogs to feed on the carcass. He told how they knew him, and in their strange wild way, loved him and understood him. There was a bond between Mawm Rukker and the savage dogs of the Ramapos, as surely and as clearly as there can exist a tie between wild creatures, pitted against the onrush of civilization.

My father listened to him and there was no dog-hunt that year, for my father's voice was still law among the farmers.

BUT this is the story of the Devil, and of Judith—about a great love, and about a wood-nymph who grew too rapidly civilized; and about a great hate and revenge and a trial-by-jury and a supreme gesture of self-sacrifice; about the great humility of a saint, and an immense, long tragedy which terminated only last night with the howling of the dogs, when Mawm Rukker died and set Judith free. So let me tell it, and let it be a warning to those who would too quickly bring "civilization" as a substitute for simplicity and primitive goodness.

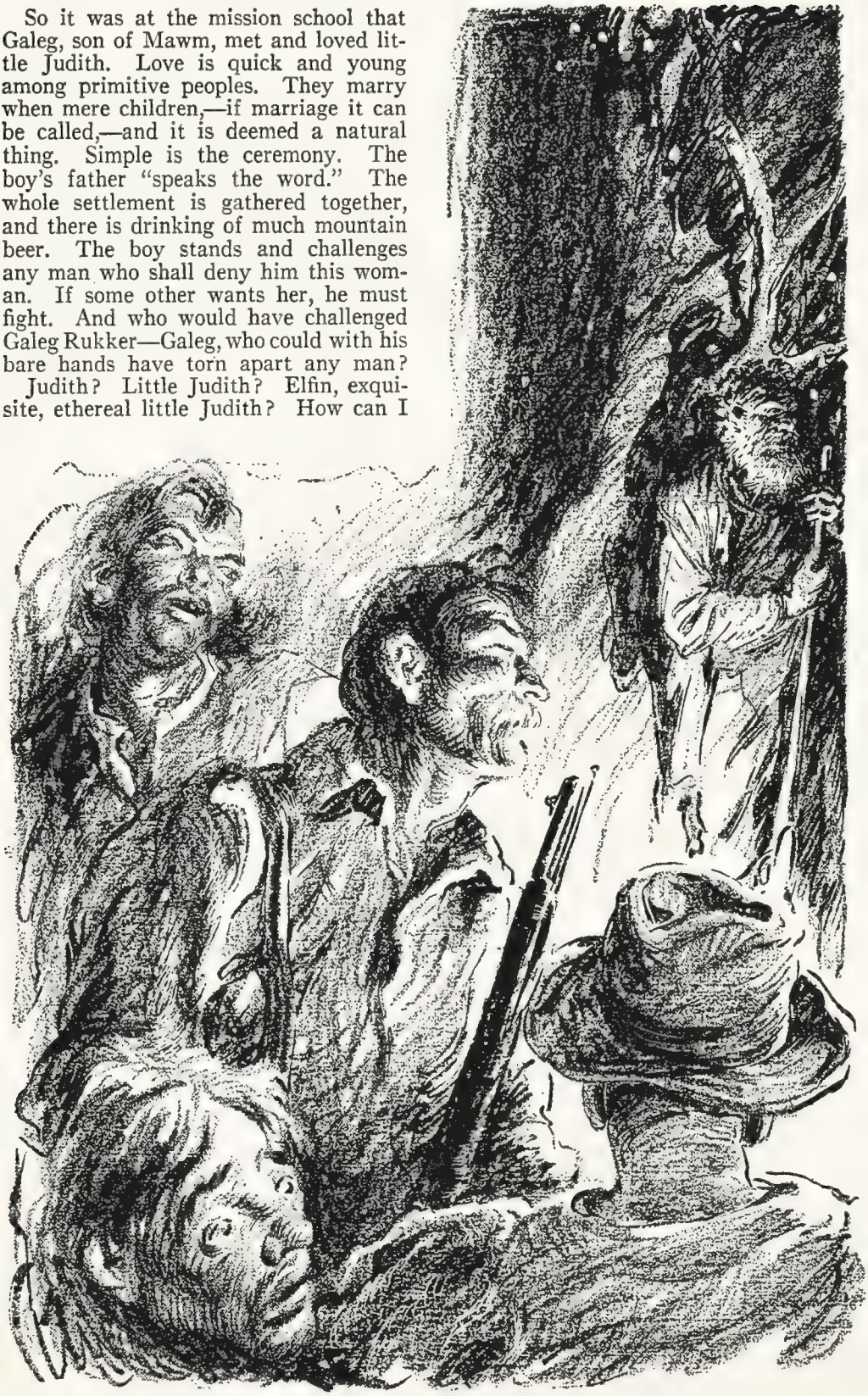
In 1903 my father died, and his huge if unprofitable practice fell to me, then a youngster in my early twenties.

It was in 1904 that the mission school came to the Houvenkopf. A fine, clean, earnest man was Burran Whatley, its founder, and a kindly, well-intentioned woman was his wife. A local man, Whatley, born and brought up in or near the New York border, and acquainted with the Jackson Whites and their tragic ignorance. Graduating from some religious seminary and earning the title of "reverend," this young man had felt the call to bring book-learning and the Word of God among these "heathen" of the mountain. I have no quarrel with him. The best of intentions are oftttimes mistaken.

And Galeg, son of Mawm Rukker, came to the mission school. A great youth, was Galeg—some four or six years younger than I, possibly. But already taller than most men, a creature of the wilderness, a green-thing, like some fabulous leprechaun grown into a giant.

So it was at the mission school that Galeg, son of Mawm, met and loved little Judith. Love is quick and young among primitive peoples. They marry when mere children,—if marriage it can be called,—and it is deemed a natural thing. Simple is the ceremony. The boy's father "speaks the word." The whole settlement is gathered together, and there is drinking of much mountain beer. The boy stands and challenges any man who shall deny him this woman. If some other wants her, he must fight. And who would have challenged Galeg Rukker—Galeg, who could with his bare hands have torn apart any man?

Judith? Little Judith? Elfin, exquisite, ethereal little Judith? How can I



"I have come to warn you," I said. "The State troopers are raising a posse. . . . Do

you hold the girl here while the blood of all of you is spattered over the stones?"

tell you of that child, nameless and alone! That child who soon blossomed into womanhood, passed through fire and became a saint?

Nameless she was, I say; nor can I give you her background. But she was not of the Jackson Whites. A fugitive from justice, presumably her father, had appeared twelve years before in my own father's time, badly wounded and terror-stricken. He "hid out" in the Ramapos, bringing his little baby,—if she was his,—and dwelt for a few weeks in one of the shacks of the Jackson Whites up on the mountain, then died there from his infected wound. My own father saw that the child was cared for by old Mary Bottle, who had thirteen other children and not a sign of a husband.

But when Judith came to the mission school, she was a beauty. Dirty and ragged like any Jack child, she may have been; but her hair hung in natural ringlets, jet black, adding richness to the white satin of her skin, framing the perfect oval of her face and bringing new luster to her lovely fawn-colored eyes. But there was more than mere beauty in her. Something primitive and fundamental there was, something quietly violent, yet poised, restless yet calm. She drew from deeper sources than those Ramapo hills. Was she some child stolen from a good home, or was she the daughter of a thief? Was she born of an illicit union, the flux of some passionate tragedy? We never knew, and never learned.

But the sixteen-year-old Galeg and the fourteen-year-old Judith met in the mission school, and love was born. We could see them often, running gayly together in the fields or on the crest of the woodland, Galeg with his rifle—wild things, happy with freedom, loving as the wild birds love, their spirits blown by the free winds.

But civilization came. . . .

We cannot, with impunity, modify the pattern of a human soul. Let missionaries beware, for the leaven yeast they dispense into the hearts of "backward" people will only too often ferment into a heady wine.

THE transfiguration of Judith was a miracle. Galeg Rukker himself was quick to learn, quick to lose his hill accent, quick to become a strapping, manly, keen-witted lad whose future was before him. But Judith became a woman. More quickly still, she learned. She devoured books and saw dream-vistas of a life beyond her knowledge—a life of comforts and clothes and jewels and balls and gallant young swains and exquisite damsels. The clever fingers of Mrs. Whatley recut and fashioned dresses for her, and quickly she emerged from her cocoon of tatters into a full-blooming butterfly, as graceful and beautiful as any young woman in the land, with rhythm and restraint in her every thought and movement.

AND then the Devil came into our valley.

The Devil's proxy was Ambrose Larning Northford, and you will remember the name. Was he not the grandson of Barnabas Northford, founder of a great fortune, whose vast estates extend for miles near Tuxedo? Was he not the son of that financial wizard whose name stands with the Goulds and the Gateses and the Fiskes, symbols of power and wealth in the fighting Wall Street days of our fathers? Innocents that we were in the Valley, we knew little of those things then, for there were few newspapers up there, and we did not know why this man should have come suddenly into a wilderness retreat among us.

But that was in 1907.

The Northford mansion, on the large acreage bordering on the Whatleys' place, was suddenly thrown open. New servants appeared, a "horseless carriage," —the first automotive vehicle in the Valley,—and a fine stable of horses; frequently an imposing well-groomed man was seen riding about, followed by a body-servant on a lesser nag, roaming over our hills. He remained aloof. He affected a dignity and a hauteur which defeated our simple offers of conversation. Grim and hard, he seemed, and there was something in his stern, handsome, mustached face, that made us all wonder.

It was, perhaps, inevitable that Northford and Judith should meet. I do not know how it came about, but soon enough they were to be seen together, seated on those fine horses, riding about for all the world—and Galeg Rukker—to see.

Then Mawm Rukker came down from the Houvenkopf to see me in my office.

My father, in his time, had been the only Valley man whom the Jackson Whites trusted and respected; and on his death, I inherited that trust, however little it was merited.

There was hurt and anger and puzzlement in the old man's eyes as he

stood there, towering above me, in my study.

"Yoong Doc," he said in that half-negro, half-Germanic speech of the hill people, "mine Galeg, he haf tooken li'l Judy for to be hisn wooman, butten she goo a-ridin' by dot man. Mine Galeg, he will bring troppel. Much troppel. Ifn you tell dot man, maybe dere is no troppel."

They stand together, those people of the hills. They love young; they love once; and a man's chosen woman needs no benefit of clergy for her protection. "Troppel?" There would be trouble indeed with the Rukkers in this mind.

So I drove to the Northford place and visited with the man.

Dark, strong, hard, grim, he was; and mine was a useless errand. He sneered.

"Are you perchance trying to interfere in my personal affairs, Doctor Borsden?" he asked me. "Or are you merely taking sides with these half-breeds against society? Let me tell you once and for all that I am quite able to take care of myself."

He showed me out, and I felt that I had done harm and not good.

STEADILY the situation grew worse as Judith became more and more "civilized." And here I cannot blame Mrs. Whatley (dead years ago, poor lady), for what she did was natural enough. Nevertheless, it was the missionary's wife who guided Judith's social development. Clad in new and brighter clothes, a veneer of the city fitting over her woodland elfin character, the girl was taken from farmhouse to homestead, "to bring her out," as Mrs. Whatley phrased it, spending many an evening with the gentry of the region and their somewhat dowdy, if prosperous wives. The day came when Ambrose Northford, breaking all precedent, apparently, for he was usually distant with his neighbors, threw wide open the doors of his mansion and crowded the magnificent old place with people. The Whatleys—and Judith with them—were prominent among the guests, and (although I was not invited) I learned that the charming young girl was the belle of the evening at that rather overdrawn party. Gossip was born, and it was cruel toward Judith.

"Uppish little hussy!" it was said. "Imagine it! Acting up with that Northford fellow just as if she *was* somebody!"

Gossip was born and grew; and gossip was fanned into caustic fire when the report was circulated through the Valley that little Judith had "accepted a place" as housekeeper for Ambrose Larning Northford.

"That child a *housekeeper!*" ran the comment. "Well, we know what that kind of housekeeper is—the little hussy!"

NEVERTHELESS the fact of Judith's elevation to a higher social status was evident enough; nor did the more pretentious of our Valley neighbors abstain from teas and occasional gatherings in the Northford mansion, even although the New Yorker treated them with an obvious assumption of superiority.

Soon enough Judith began to be seen in Northford's wheezing car, smartly dressed in costumes brought from the city's mart, or mounted on one of her employer's fine horses in a swagger riding habit—a creature of poise, of dignity and of beauty, a transformed Cinderella who had found her Prince Charming.

And then the tragedy started.

From my own window I witnessed its beginning. I saw Northford and Judith charging down the little valley where the winding road leaps a brook and falls over into Hohokus township, five hundred yards or so from my own doorway. I saw the tall, massive form of Galeg Rukker suddenly emerge from the bushes and stand straight and stiff in their path. I saw the two horses stop, and I witnessed a pantomime of violent speaking between the men.

And of a sudden Northford jumped from his horse and stood squarely in front of the young hill-man, menacing and squat, like the heavy bull confronting the lithe tiger. I saw a blow. I saw the two men rush together. I saw Judith's horse plunge and turn and come tearing up the hillside toward my house. And then I saw the man Northford on the ground and Galeg standing over him.

I ran from my study. I could hear Judith's screams from over the ridge, and when her horse came tearing into my driveway she charged down upon me, reining her mount strongly and still screaming.

"He'll kill him, Doctor. Oh, don't let him—don't—don't!" she cried; and then she sank, overcome, on the gravel road.

I picked her up and seated her gently against a tree; then I ran forward over the ridge.

Galeg Rukker was walking slowly and thoughtfully toward me, his head down, his feet dragging.

A shot rang out below us, and I heard a cry farther down the path. We hurried, trusting to instinct and Judith's knowledge of the hills. My lantern rays discovered a prone figure moaning in agony. It was Burran Whatley, shot through the chest.

"I saw it, Galeg," I said. "I can't blame you, my boy, but that is no way to do things."

"He'll be needing your help, Doc," said Galeg. "Where's Judy?"

"Back there," I said, pointing. "And she'll be needing your help, too, I imagine." Then I hurried on to where Northford lay sprawling.

Unconscious, he was, and cruelly beaten. He was a big man too—broad of shoulder and massive as a gorilla; but he was no match for the young giant of the hills. I think Galeg Rukker, at that time, was even more powerful than his huge father. I worked on the man, and he recovered, slowly, sitting up and wiping the blood from his face.

"I'm sorry for this, Northford," I told him. "I tried to warn you, you know."

His only answer was a growl and a glare; and as he stalked away, whistling for his horse which stood browsing nearby, I knew that there would be a sequel to this unfortunate incident.

Back in my driveway Galeg and Judith were talking, the boy standing awkwardly yet nobly, and the girl sitting up against the tree where I had left her. She was crying softly.

"Oh, Galeg," she was saying, "can't you see? Can't you understand? I wanted you to leave the Houvenkopf and educate yourself—to be somebody. I wanted you to *want* to. I tried to *show* you. . . . But you wouldn't see. I'd have waited for you—"

"You know I can't leave my father," said Galeg, simply and quietly. "He wouldn't understand."

"You could have helped him more if you had learned how to live—how to mix with people—how to make money to live on. Oh, can't you see? I can't live that life of the hills any longer. It's all changed now. And I can't—love you—that way—not that old way, Galeg. I'm going to marry Mr. Northford, Galeg."

I SAW the boy stiffen at that. I saw the color leave his face, and a pallor come over him.

"Judy," he said slowly and with great pain in his voice, "yo' can't do that to me. Yo' married me, Judy, an' yo' be my wife. We didn't get ourselves married in no church, but that don't make no diff'rence. You're my woman. If yo' want a church weddin', I'll get yo' one. Yo' don't love that city feller, Judy. It's clo's yo' loves, an' automobiles an' a big house. Don't yo' make no mistake, Judy. Yo' aint his kind o' people. Yo' belongs up on our mountain. If yo' plants a wood posy in a garden, yo' gets a dead flower. If yo' takes one of our wild dogs an' puts him in a city, yo' gets a dead dog. Them folks don't want yo', Judy. That man aint goin' for to keep yo'. Yo' aint never goin' to belong to nobody else but me. . . . Judy, don't yo' know that?"

I could see fear creep into her face—stark fear, fright of truth. She sagged. Her head fell forward into her arms, and the tears came.

And then, suddenly and with almost a single movement, Galeg Rukker caught the girl up in his arms and crushed her to him; and before I could fathom his gesture, he had sprung away, running with her in his arms—she crying and beating at him with her little fists—running to where her horse stood browsing, and threw her across the neat pad of an English saddle, flinging himself up behind her, and tearing across the fields toward the Houvenkopf with the girl dangling like a sack of grain.

TWO State troopers called at my house that afternoon and with them was Ambrose Larning Northford. Not the trained, educated troopers of today were these mounted soldier-policemen, but cynical hard adventurers in uniform.

"Speak up now, Doctor. Where's the woman?" they demanded.

I pointed to the mountain.

"Looks like there's a felony somewhere, and you'd better be careful how you're mixed up in this. We're taking that boy for assault. We've had just about enough of these hill-billies, anyhow."

Northford said nothing; but as they rode off, I saw trouble in his eye.

It takes about an hour, either on foot or on horseback, to climb the Houvenkopf. The only pass is steep, sharp, treacherous—impassable in bad weather. And it was just about an hour after this interview that I heard two shots ring out, far up in the high forest. Deer-hunters? This was spring, and the deer were not in season. But I had no time for speculation, for there was another visitor at my gate.

It was the young missionary Burran Whatley.

"There's trouble, Doctor," he said, "and I've come to you because you are the only man who knows the hill people. That wild man Mawm Rukker came down to the cabin and took all my young-

sters away. He told us to get out. He said—as nearly as I can understand it—that if we didn't leave the Valley tonight, he'd burn our place. He was really frightful. I've never seen such a savage fellow in my life. I'm not exactly afraid, of course—but there's Mrs. Whatley to consider. What in the world does it mean?"

I told him.

"And I think you'd better take Rukker's advice and go—for a while, at least. If this blows over, you can begin again."

The poor chap went away, troubled and shaking his head.

IT was quite late that evening when the two troopers came back to my house. They came afoot, and they were both in fairly bad shape—one shot through the shoulder and the other with his skull cracked from blows of a club.

"Those damned hill-billies!" they shouted at me. "They shot our horses on the rock crest of the mountain, and then winged at us. We pushed over the hill to fight them, but there was a gang of about thirty men with rifles. One of them took a pot-shot at me." This was the man with the gunshot wound talking. "And they beat hell out of my pal here. We'll get a posse together this very night and drive them right out of the country. Now you fix us up, and see damned well that you keep out of this. We know your sympathies, Doc. One trick out of you, and you'll land in jail."

That was all very well, but I had no intention of letting the Valley farmers start a war with the Jackson Whites. There are some five thousand of these queer wild people, scattered through a dozen or more colonies, all over the Ramapos; and the raising of a posse would mean nothing less than war. Bloody war. Stupid, useless war.

So that night I slipped away quietly and climbed up the mountain-side to talk with Mawm Rukker.

Have you ever climbed a rugged little mountain—even a little one, like the Houvenkopf—at deepest night, with the mossy rocks all slimy under your feet from the springtime drizzle? With crawling things scurrying around you? With the woods so dark and dense that you can't see your own hands? With the knowledge that a misstep in some places is certain death—your body rolling down a sheer stony ledge and dashing into the rocks of the swift-shallow Ramapo River underneath? Imagine that, and then imagine the added knowledge that any minute some marksman who has never missed in his life may take a pot-shot at you before asking who you are.

But I got up there, somehow. I got to the crest, where the little hovels of the Jacks seem clustering and nestling shoulder to shoulder, as though to keep warm. And I called out to Mawm Rukker, giving my name and trusting in God that some one didn't shoot me out of sheer excitement.

However, the great man's form loomed up against the light of a flaming torch at the sound of my voice, and he called out:

"Ifn yo' coom a frien', yoong Doc, step oot here und show. Butten coom yo' ag'in' usn, yo' best goon back."

I stepped over the rocks into the strangest gathering of humans I have ever witnessed.

Picture them for yourself—picture a circle of some two hundred men and women—black or brown, half of them; cynical Indian faces; drawn, pinched, yellowing faces of degenerates; deformed skulls, deformed limbs, deformed bodies; shrunken little men and women; huge tall fellows of Italian cast, or mayhap Portuguese who were not rightly of the Jacks but had joined them, escaping from the laws of civilization. Picture them, in tatters, in trousers stolen from your own clothesline, and shirts roped about them in the middle like Russian blouses. Fat squaws, there were, with broad haunches and broad cheek-bones, the pure-blooded descendants of the Tuscaroras. Lean, hungry youths, there were, with that shifty, half-sodden look of the drunkard.

And there was a fine new rifle in the hand of each man and woman. However poor the Jacks may be, they can all, somehow, afford a rifle.

This was a council of war. This was trouble. This was a peril to our quiet Valley, a peril brought there by the Devil in the person of a fellow named Northford—and by the caprices of a foolish, too-quickly-educated girl.

AND then I saw Judith. She stood there, staring at me, by Galeg Rukker's side. Gone were her fine clothes, her swagger riding-habit. She stood there leaning on the boy's arm, full of fear, full of worry, full of puzzled resentment and terror at the bees'-nest that was buzzing around her.

I started talking.

"I have come to warn you," I said. "The State troopers are raising a posse. I'm not going to talk about right and wrong. I'm only going to tell you that if you fight with the law, you'll have a bloody war that will not stop until the militia—the soldiers with machine-guns and field cannon—have driven you all from the mountain. For God's sake, stop and think. Judith, do you see what you've done? You will be responsible for the death of all these people. The Valley people will set fire to the mountain. They'll burn your village. You've got to come back with me."

And on I went. I pointed to their tiny one-room hovels—built of logs and stolen boards. I pointed to their scrawny children, peeking frightened out of the paneless windows. I told them it was murder to carry this vengeance on. I pleaded and I begged them to release the girl and let her go back. And they listened, silently, drunkenly, most of them —and stupidly. There was muttering among them, and dissension and clamor. One burly, squat, wild-looking fellow with a graying beard that flowed like moss or lichens over his swarthy face, screamed at me insanely, flourishing his rifle; but the others quieted him; and Mawm Rukker's booming voice silenced them all as he said these words:

"Whuch law is ut in yo' Valley, dot take away a man his wooman?"

HOW could I answer? How could I spend precious minutes to teach these simple people the ways of civilization and to explain the paradoxes of what we are pleased to call "justice?"

I said only:

"Galeg took the girl by force, Mawm Rukker, and force cries out for force in reply. Do you hold the girl here against her will? Will she stay by her man—your son—while the blood of all of you is spattered over the stones? Give the girl her choice, Mawm Rukker," I pleaded. "Let her stay—or come back with me if she will."

Fine old patriarch, that man; and there was a straightforward justice in him that needed no urging. He stood there against the flickering light, pondering, and I could see the battle of mind that was going on within him.

But he made no answer—not then. Instead it was the girl Judith who spoke, stepping away from Galeg into the center of the people.

"I'll go back," she said, and her voice was tortured and low. "Let me go back with the Doctor. I did this thing. I'll have no blood shed on my account."

"Judy!" Galeg Rukker strode out to her, lifting her high from the ground in his huge arms. "Judy—yo'll not leave me now. Yo' wouldn't do that!"

"Put me down, Galeg."

He did, slowly. Every eye was on them. Then Judith went on, a little tremulously, sadly, with great effort:

"I'll go back," she said. "I do not love Galeg. A woman has a right to choose her own man. Take—me—back, Doctor Borsden—quickly. . . . Hurry!"

Then she tottered toward me and sank slowly to the ground before I could catch her and hold her steady.

GALEG again started forward, but Mawm Rukker stopped him.

"No, Galeg; yo'll not tech dot wooman. Usn'll do better shoold she goo. Ifn a wooman not lof her man, den ut's no goot. Butten the yoong Doc can tell them, doon dere, dot the river marks oor coontry. We'll haf not o' dere schoolin', und ifn dey coom op on the mountain, ut's bullets dey'll git from ourn peoples."

That was all. I knew it. I knew that no more talk would serve. I led the girl out of the flaming ring of faces, and over the ledge of rock where the narrow path winds down the mountain; and soon enough we were lost in the black of forest night, with only the low murmur of voices above us to tell us that the Jackson Whites were still there, still watchful, still full of hate and hurt toward the outer, civilized world.

And Judith was crying, softly.

"Oh, God, what have I done, what have I done?" she was saying over and over. "They're my people. . . . I can't —I can't let anything happen to them—to Galeg."

And I knew then that it was Galeg Rukker and not that hard Northford man whom she loved. Was this sacrifice? Was this ambition? Was this some perverted obstinacy of a young girl whose head was turned? I didn't know then.

A shot rang out below us and to the right, and I heard a cry farther down the path. We hurried as best we could, scrambling over dangerous ledges, trusting to my instinct and to Judith's long knowledge of the hills. My hand-lantern was none too bright, but its rays could not fail to discover the prone, dark, heaving figure that clung to a bush

and moaned in agony some twenty feet below us.

It was Burran Whatley, the missionary, shot through the chest, and bleeding terribly. Who could have done that? Why was he there? Had Mawm Rukker and his resentful people run amok, after all? Were we to be plunged into the bloodshed I had tried so hard to avoid?

I PICKED him up in my arms while Judith, frightened and weeping, opened his clothes and tried to stanch the flow of blood with a handkerchief. A kindly but ascetic face, had the Reverend Burran Whatley, and even with the print of suffering written plainly on it, there was warmth in him, humanity in him.

He was revived a little by our movement of his body, and he managed to open his eyes.

"Don't tell the men—below," he faltered. "They're—coming. I tried—tried to warn—"

And then he fainted again. Or perhaps he died then; for he never regained consciousness after that.

"Don't tell the men," he had said; and I knew that this frail, ascetic man had had the courage to brave the hill folk, in spite of their threats to burn his school, and to warn them a posse was coming.

But the posse came. We had no time to hide the body of Whatley, for they crept up on us of a sudden, calling out and challenging us as they peered over a cleft of rock, covering us with their rifles.

I gave my name. I heard Northford's hard voice saying:

"You see? He's playing right in with these hill-billies. Better arrest him now, and hold him."

"There's a hurt man here," I called out. "It's Whatley, the missionary. Some of you better help me down with him." And then I saw them move carefully up toward me.

There were only ten or so, for the farmers of the Valley were not likely to join such a posse in large numbers. Dislike the mountain people they did, but they had respect for those dead-shot rifles, and they wanted peace. Then the light of their lanterns fell on Judith, who had stood silent, still crying gently.

It was one of the troopers who spoke.

"Hell, here's yer girl, Mr. Northford!"

She did not move.

"Judith?" The man's voice rang out, sharp and commanding. "Judith, what's all this about? Did they hurt you, girl?"

She said nothing.

"Judith," he cried, coming up to her; but the rest of the scene was lost in the excitement over Whatley. I only saw Northford take her by the hand and try to draw her to him. She was stiff and diffident and silent and unyielding, but she let him lead her away a few paces down the steep path.

Then the fury broke.

"Whatley's dead—they've killed him! It's that devil Rukker. Come on, boys, let's go after them!"

I tried hard, then. I tried hard to dissuade them, to show them the stupidity of perpetuating this fight, of starting a feud that would make the Ramapo River run red with blood. But it was no use. They laughed at me. They jeered at me. They called me "nigger-lover," and charged up the mountain, all but two who carried the body of the dead missionary mournfully back to his waiting widow.

And I stumbled slowly back to my farm, knowing that by the morrow there would be a living hell in the Valley.

Judith? I did not see her go. I did not see her led away by the triumphant Northford, but I knew secretly and tragically that her sacrifice had been in vain, that she loved Galeg Rukker, and not this suave city man and all his ill-gotten money.

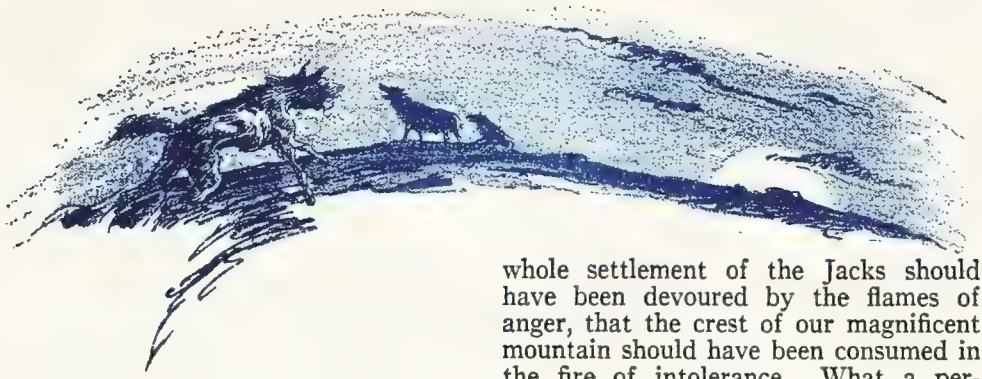
HELL in our Valley!

All night long there were shots crackling in the forest of the Houvenkopf. Word of Whatley's death had spread like wildfire, and more of the farmers joined the posse, indignant that this good young man should have been, however mistakenly, a victim of this stupid blood-feud.

And in the morning, looking in terror from my window, I could see a fierce column of smoke at the top of the mountain where raging flames, lighted by blind rage, were devouring the green firs and the maples—burning the pathetic little cabins of the Jackson Whites, whose only real fault was that they had stood by one another, were loyal to each other, that they believed in the sacredness of a simple pledge of troth.

"We'll burn those devils out!" the troopers had said, and they felt themselves justified. . . .

A blood-feud in New Jersey within thirty miles of New York? Today you can follow a State route where the cement automobile trail has cut through



the Houvenkopf, laying bare and naked a tiny cluster of one-story shacks, exposing the very souls of these forest people to the eyes of tourists, and you would never suspect what fearsome history has been lived there. You can see the brown, black, yellowish or tainted white skins of the people who stare at you as you whirl through their little "city," peeking timidly out of their doors, and you would never guess the fierceness that once was theirs. But turn back the pages of history, read the old newsprint of those early days of this century, and you find yourself plunged into an era of warfare, bloodshed, race-hatred and blind, stupid savagery which rivals anything you have learned of the mountain feuds of Tennessee.

Law and justice—strange, ambiguous words are those. They admit of a thousand interpretations. They vary with the soil and with the climate and with the state of people's souls. What is justice in Timbuctoo may be a crime in Hoboken; and if those two remote points were somehow to be thrown together, who should mete out justice which would be just for both?

There had been a murder. The death —unwarranted and inexplicable—of Burran Whatley could not, under our civilized laws, go unpunished. But there had been a wanton destruction of the homes of the Jackson Whites, nor could that blind, rage-built crime pass without vengeance under the code of those simple people. And thus the feud began. The Houvenkopf is not the only settlement of the Jacks in the Ramapos. Thousands of those people are scattered in small, hidden clusters throughout the mountains, and when "our" settlement was driven by fire from the Houvenkopf, they took shelter with their cousins, clamoring for vengeance.

Clannish were our farmers, and that brought cruelty. Cruel it was that the whole settlement of the Jacks should have been devoured by the flames of anger, that the crest of our magnificent mountain should have been consumed in the fire of intolerance. What a perverted thing justice can be! And when the smoldering ruins of those straight firs and lace-like maples were mere cold ashes,—as though the mountain had doffed its cap and revealed only a bald, tired, aged skull, as though Death had worn a toupee,—the farmers of our Valley drew a breath of greater ease, as if at last some menace had been driven away, as if that pyre had been a symbol of a new safety for them.

But this ease was not to last.

Not long after that tragedy, the rumor of Northford's impending marriage to Judith filtered through the Valley.

"Well," hissed Mrs. Farmwife, "it's about time *something* was done. Imagine a thing like that going on under our very noses! But I can't understand how he could actually *marry* her."

Bustle was apparent at the Northford estate. Servants were busy. Windows were shut in with heavy blinds, as though the very soul of the great house might escape during its owner's absence; storm-doors were erected, barns and stables locked, those fine horses shipped away to a more southerly climate.

And lastly, one day, the great, noisy automobile of Ambrose Northford was seen to leave his wooded driveway, roaring down the hill road toward the turnpike's junction, the goggled figure of Northford himself at the wheel, and beside him, the duster-clad form of a woman whose face was concealed under an immense motoring-veil and by a "picture hat" such as was worn in those days. It could only have been Judith.

OUR hill road of hard-packed earth passes through a heavily wooded acre or two before it plunges down into the lower Valley where begins the broad State highway. A small boy engaged in shooting at sparrows or squirrels in this wood saw the car pass, and ran after them a bit, since an automobile was still

something of a phenomenon in those days. As the car rounded the last turn, the boy heard the crack of a rifle, a scream, a crash. Running faster, he saw the car laboring in the ditch, its rear wheels whirring and tossing a futile stream of dirt, its driver slumped over the wheel. He saw also a tall, bushy, red-headed man bending over the tonneau and lifting the inert form of the woman from the car.

And the boy, frightened in the face of death, saw the man carry his limp burden into the trees and there disappear. Then he ran breathlessly and reported what he had seen to his father, who in turn telephoned the incredible news to the Sheriff in Suffern.

Who had fired that shot? Who had killed Ambrose Northford, found drilled cleanly through the head, still gripping the wheel of his car? Imagination and fancy gave the answer: Mawm Rukker. Popular legend, born of suspicion and not a little senseless fear, gave the answer: Mawm Rukker. And so, in every local barber-shop, in every post office and country store where men congregate, there appeared a printed placard: WANTED FOR MURDER: *Mawm Rukker, of the Houvenkopf Jackson-White settlement.*

The Sheriff, aided by the State troopers, organized another posse, numbering more than fifty men, to march or ride through the entire region and to hunt down the alleged murderer, Mawm Rukker—wherever he might be found. This simple old man—to me so harmless and so loyal—was singled out as a symbol of menace. Both murders, that of Whatley and of Northford, were charged against him, despite the fact that it was patently impossible that he could have committed the first, and that the excited testimony of a small boy merely *suggested* him in the second case.

THE little army of vigilantes crossed over the Taurn, over the Houvenkopf, over the lowly mountains of the region, bursting into squalid settlements where frightened women and round-eyed children cringed in their evil-smelling huts and babbled nothingness in answer to the questions—threatening questions—which were hurled at them. But they found no men. It seemed as though all the male members of the Jackson race had suddenly vanished, evaporated into thin air. Armed to the teeth with shotguns and rifles, the farmers had expected pitched battle, but not a shot greeted them in any one of the villages. And Mawm Rukker? He had not been seen. The women were dumb, speechless, incoherent.

A pack of bloodhounds, procured from a considerable distance, was set upon the trail. The pack outdistanced the men, vanished in full cry up the side of the Wanaque watershed, and disappeared. Those dogs never returned. No trace of them was ever found again.

ON the third day of the search a party of vigilantes swept through the Bear Pond Swamp, crossing the Ramapo River, intending to beat through the near-jungle of the highest range, leading with them, on leashes, another pack of bloodhounds. There is a sharp dip in the land, lower even than the swampy pond, but dry enough for careful foot-travel, just before the sheer steep of the mountain rises up to meet the county line. And when the party reached this valley-within-a-valley, Death suddenly swooped down upon them.

Not gunshots. Not a frenzied charge of the mountain people. A new, unsuspected, savage, horrible death closed in upon them like an avenging fury. Only two men, terribly torn and bleeding, were able to drag themselves through to Hilburn; and the story they told is almost unbelievable.

The first warning of danger came when the bloodhounds, fierce beasts themselves, began whimpering and shaking, and refused to go on. Dusk was closing down slowly, and visibility was not of the best, but there was no sign of any lurking trouble.

Then, with a howling snarl, the terrible wild dogs of the Ramapos swarmed over those men in a black wave of destruction!

The thing seems unbelievable today; and yet even now, when the Ramapos are enlaced by cement roads and peopled by new, bright settlements where houses are modern and sanitary, where police uniforms abound, where factories send their smoke to mingle with the age-old clouds—even in this day, the wild dogs sometimes appear in full packs, vicious, destructive, savage beyond credibility.

And these werewolves, these phantom hounds, gathered in a foraging pack, hurled themselves upon those men. It is reported that they numbered hundreds, charging down into that narrow ravine as though their pack-leader were a sagacious general who knew his military tactics.

No chance for firearms; quarters were too close, and light was bad, and there was danger of shooting one another.

The survivors of this terrible slaughter report how the bristling monsters suddenly loomed out of cover, fangs bared, bloodied, their muzzles a-froth. Useless to club with shotguns. Useless to flay at the beasts with branches, pelt them with stones, slash at them with hunting-knives. They came like the onslaught of multifold death, suddenly, like a wolf-pack tearing their prey as the wolf tears the roebuck. Lean and black and famished, they were, and fearless in their mad hunger. They overwhelmed the men with sheer numbers. They snarled like demons incarnate. A very hell opened up in that swampy valley as the terrible beasts slashed men down, tearing them, rending them, devouring them.

And then suddenly—as suddenly as they had appeared, they vanished.

A shrill whistle sounded up on the mountain-side, so goes the report, and the dog-pack paused in their bloody battle—paused, and then vanished into the gloom of the trees, leaving only the torn shreds of what had been that posse of vigilantes.

Whistle? A whistle is a human sound. What human agency could have given that signal? What man-being could have had empire and mastery over such savage brutes?

Two of the posse, escaping somehow from the fate of the others, were able to drag their painful ways back to the little settlement of Hilburn, there to tell the story, gasping in agony of their hurts. A man had been seen, they said. A fabulous man, a creature of legend, had stood silhouetted against the falling sun, high on a rocky ledge. It had been he who whistled. Tall, he was, and bushy, and armed with a rifle. He had stood there and whistled, fingers in his mouth, and the dogs had vanished.

And the legend gave birth to an answer: the man could only have been Mawm Rukker, the "wild man" of the hills.

MAWM RUKKER! Mawm Rukker—"Keeper of the Beasts," they called him. "Wild man of the mountains," they called him. "The dog-man," they called him—"Murderer, fiend, ghoul, vampire." Dig into that old volume of newspapers, now sere and yellow, which your fathers cherished so preciously, dig into it and browse through it, see the records of that story, see the trial and the conviction of Mawm Rukker, learn what prejudice and fertile imagination can do, what a curse it can bring upon the head of a man, innocent of all criminal intent, whose only crime is the protection of his home, loyalty to his son, obedience to the oldest of all laws, that of an eye for an eye.

FROM Trenton and from Albany came the authority to mobilize the State militia. A state of siege was declared on the mountains. The counties of Bergen and Rockland and Sussex and Passaic were to become camping-grounds for grim soldiery, armed with machine-guns and fine rifles. The iron hand of "civilization," once and for all, was to reach out and grasp these little people and bring them by force into the herd of law-abiding, rule-of-thumb citizens.

And the goal of all this mobilization, the aim of it, was the capture of an aging, tiring, uncomprehending man, old Mawm Rukker.

But it never came to pass.

One day two bony nags rode into the town of Suffern. Mounted on one of them was a woman—a mere girl, almost—dressed in the ragged, branch-torn clothing of the hill folk; and upon the other, carrying his long rifle across his back, his head bowed, his red bush hatless in the breeze, was Mawm Rukker. Crowds followed them in the street, but they saw them not. A murmur arose behind them:

"It's Rukker—it's that mountain devil! Lynch him—kill him—string him up!"

But no hand was laid upon them.

They rode to the office of the State troopers. There they climbed down from their nags and entered the door. They confronted a blue-uniformed captain at his desk, and the girl Judith made this statement:

"Mawm Rukker has come to give himself up. He is guilty of nothing. He committed no murders. He is doing this to save his people. Send your soldiers back, and let the hill people alone. Give this man a fair trial and set him free. We don't want any more bloodshed or any more death."

And the rumbling voice of Mawm Rukker boomed out:

"Yis, dot is right. Dere is too mooch; too many off mine peoples are dead. Too many off your peoples are dead. Yo' haf want me; now I coom."

"Keeper of the beasts," they called him," "—Devil-man—wild man of the mountains." Did it never occur to them that this man was also a father?

The trial was held in Hackensack, the government seat of Bergen County. The passage of time lends an atmosphere of implausibility to the facts of that fantastic assize, but the account visible in the Bergen County *Chronicle* for all time will reveal to what heights of hysteria public emotion could rise. And Mawm Rukker, that primitive, simple man who had surrendered himself only in order that his fellow-men might live, was condemned even before the judge was seated at the bench.

Thirty-two witnesses for the State; two witnesses for the defense. Thirty-two men unknowingly perjured themselves to condemn to death a bewildered, ignorant, uncomprehending man. Two persons—the girl Judith and myself—tried vainly to move the hardened hearts of those twelve jurors to whom the name Jackson White meant only outcast, only savagery.

LET me give you a picture of Mawm Rukker, standing in the prisoner's dock. Let me paint for you a creature of the wilds, confined, restive, dazed, towering over the mere men of that crowded room and its morbidly curious, like some primitive god. Let me show you a shouting, bullying prosecutor, howling phrases and sentences at the bushy Nimrod, shaking an accusing finger, smirking, insinuating, ranting, and acting a pantomime of which Mawm Rukker understood not a single word or gesture.

"Now, my man," said the prosecutor, as reported by the *Chronicle*, "you admit coming down to the mission school of the late Burran Whatley and driving away the young children whom he was instructing in Christianity and other learning, and telling him to leave the Valley or you would burn his cabin. In other words, you admit threatening him? Come, speak up—answer yes or no."

"Yis, ut's true dot I haf coom down—"

"There, Your Honor, the man admits the threat. Now let us examine—"

Then again, that insufferable prosecutor would shout at Rukker:

"So you admit the possession of a rifle—specifically a .30-30 of the type known as a 'pump-action repeater,' whose bullet would make just such a wound as was found in the body of the late Ambrose Larning Northford? You admit it, don't you? You brought such a rifle with you when you came down to Suffern. You admit owning it, don't you? Answer me, Rukker."

And the bewildered old man replied, falteringly:

"Dot is a goot gun. Butten I haf no steal ut. I haf pay for ut mineself. Whyen you haf tooken my gun?"

And still again:

"You say you did not cause the dogs to attack the Sheriff's posse? But you admit that you sometimes feed those wild creatures. You admit that you have often shot a deer or other game—illicitly and out of season, too—and left the carcass for the wild dogs. In other words, you were friendly with the dogs, were you not? They knew you and they would obey you?"

"De dogs? Yis, I haf feed dem many times."

"So they follow you through the hills, eh?"

"Sometime maybe dey coom near me, yis, but—"

"You admit that, do you? And how do you call them when you have killed a deer?"

"Maybe I haf whistle de dogs, dey coom—"

"So they come when you whistle, eh? And yet you claim you did not set the dogs on those men! Was it you who whistled for them to come away?"

"Yis, I coom doon whan I haf hear troppel doon dere, an' when I see dem dogs fight by dose men, I whistle."

"That's right! You whistled, and the dogs came away up to you. But how do you explain the fact that the dogs were there—the whole pack together—when the posse was looking for you? Just how can you explain that? Tell us, Rukker. The Court wants to know."

"Maybe I haf not understood so goot, Mistah. De dogs, dey roon always togedder lak' dat coom springtime. Maybe dey want for to kill sheeps, maybe cows, I don' know. Whan I see dem kill de mens, I try stop dem. I whistle; dey coom—dat's all I know."

"A likely story, Your Honor. Perhaps we have here not a murderer but a hero. I shall not presume to interpret this remarkable coincidence, however. I shall leave it to the keen discretion of the jury."

Rukker, the murderer!

I CAN see a pale, wan little girl in the witness-box, holding out her hands, pleading, spilling tears, pouring out a heart full of regret, of fear, of tragic hope. I can hear her again saying those words:

"Can't you see, Your Honor? If there is any fault, it is mine. I do not know who it was who killed Mr. Whatley, but it wasn't Mawm Rukker. . . . He was in his house, with his son and me, until I went back with the Doctor. Some of the men were posted as sentries. They would have shot at anyone. They were only trying to protect me. They believed I was married to Galeg—it's the way they do things in the hills. They believed Mr. Northford was taking me away—from my man, my husband. They couldn't understand. They thought the whole Valley wanted to take me away. It was my fault. I couldn't make them know. They couldn't understand how I could go off and marry Mr. Northford when I was already married to Galeg Rukker—their kind of marriage."

Then the prosecutor's suave voice brought shame to the girl.

"Your Honor," he said, "I am forced to admire and to approve the plausible confession of guilt on the part of this young woman. Undoubtedly she is fundamentally to blame. But this is not the trial of a young woman who wanted luxury instead of a log cabin. This is the trial of a man for the charge of murder. This young woman—called, I believe, simply Judith and wanting another name—appears as a witness in behalf of the accused. One can but admire the stanchness of her—shall I say plea?—in behalf of the father of her—ah—lover. Yet it is the right—may I say the duty?—of the prosecution to discredit, if possible, any witness upon contingent grounds. I regret exceedingly this duty, but Your Honor, and gentlemen of the jury, I cannot but perform my duty in exposing to you another face of this seemingly noble young woman—a face, may I say, less agreeable, less—ah—noble—"

I can remember the suspense, the cleverly created tension, in the pause

"The dogs knew you and would obey you?. . . . Yet you claim you did not set the dogs on those men!"

that followed this remark. I can remember the astonished look in the eyes of Judith, the bewilderment of her, and the pitiful expression of hurt and shock in her face.

"The witness, Your Honor," he continued, "has admitted her presence in the automobile of the late Ambrose Northford at the time of his death. They were, she asserts, driving to New York, there to be united in holy wedlock."

HE paused again, and then lifting his voice, shaking his finger at the girl, he roared:

"But Ambrose Larning Northford was a married man!"

Shocked silence.

"I will produce certified copies of the records to prove that Mr. Northford had been married these ten years, and that his wife was and is not only alive, but that he was in constant correspondence with her. Therefore, gentlemen,—therefore, Your Honor,—it becomes apparent that the witness was not and could not have been undertaking a trip with the deceased which was to end in lawful matrimony.

"And that is not all. In the pockets of the deceased, when the body was found, were discovered passage tickets on the Allen Line steamer *Breresford*, destination, Liverpool; and one of those tickets was in the name of a certain Judith Northford—inscribed as sister of the deceased. . . . Sister, Your Honor—sister! Can we be so sure, can we be quite positive, that *all* of this estimable young woman's words, her seeming nobleness, her urgent pleas, are not moved by an impulse of that oldest of human vices—cupidity, covetousness? I rest my case, Your Honor."

Filthy, morbid, bitter insinuation! The court was in an uproar. Spectators cackled with laughter; they hissed and sneered. And as they sneered, Judith, the nameless, sprang blindly to her feet, muttering:

"I didn't know—I didn't know. . . . Oh, how could they? How could he—"

Then she fainted.

Three days for that trial. Three stupid, blind, farcical days of mock-justice. Myself, I was browbeaten and sneered at as a "nigger-lover" in that court. Clients whose lives and the lives of whose children I had saved were there, sneering and snarling. And on the third day the jury, charged by a confident judge, brought back the verdict: "Guilty!"

Mawm Rukker, guilty of murder.

Mawm Rukker, guilty of a wholesale slaughter.

Mawm Rukker, sentenced to death by hanging.

Mawm Rukker, a puzzled old man, not even understanding why it was that the morbid crowd cheered, not even comprehending clearly that he was accused, of what he was accused, hardly grasping why it was that he, coming down from his mountain fastness, was held in a tiny cell, badly fed and his hands fastened with unbreakable steel . . . Mawm Rukker, standing up and facing the judge, and saying gently in that vibrant woodland voice:

"Den I kin goo now? Ut is finish? Dere will be no more troppels?"

And the crowd sneering, sneering with ironical laughter!

But the moment came.

THERE was a scuffle in the rear of the courtroom. A door was flung open. A handful of guards were flung down sprawling on the floor. The gigantic figure of a man—bristling, unshaven, ruddy, his hair gleaming red, a scrubby beard on his face, his eyes wild and compelling, broke through them and charged down the aisle.

"Stop!" his voice said. "Wait. I'm Galeg Rukker. I'm the man yo' want, not my father. Try me, not him. Talk to me, not to him, damn yo'!"

Crash of the gavel.

Rush of more court guards.

Screams of a startled crowd.

And Galeg Rukker's voice bellowing:

"I killed Ambrose Northford. I killed him, yo' hear? I shot him, y' hear me? Let me talk, damn yo' all."

OH, they let him talk. Even the warped justice of prejudice could not refuse that.

You can read Galeg's single, simple, violent statement in the *Chronicle*. Perhaps your fathers will have saved it these years as I have, for nothing like it was ever spoken in any courtroom; nor has any trial ended as did that of Mawm Rukker.

Slow was the boy's speech; bookish was his English, and scarcely at all did he lapse into the strange bastard idiom of his hill race.

But there was blood in those slow, careful words, love in his words, hate and death and loyalty in his words; and they fanned the fierce fire of him, standing there in the courtroom, storming at a jury, at a judge, at a crowd of stunned people, pouring out the indignation of an entire race against a civilization that could, in its smug complacency, in its mistaken well-meaningness, betray him and his own people.

"Listen!" he said. And the commanding power of his words stirred strange emotions in that stuffy room. "Listen, yo'! A man takes away my woman—my wife, she is . . . And I killed him. Yo' send people up to teach us learnin', an' they teach us how we're poor. They make my woman ashamed o' me, an' so she don't want me no more. My pop told him to go away . . . I mean that missionary feller. He didn't go, so I killed him, too. What makes you think it's my pop who done that? What makes you think it's my pop who set the dogs on you? D'yo' think a man kin set dogs like that on anybody? Yo' send a bunch of men up in our hills right now, an' the dogs'll get 'em! Yo' call yourselfs educated, but I'm tellin' yo' you're jest ign'rant. I aint sorry none. I aint done nothin' 'cept what any man would 'a' done. Yo' let my pop go. He aint done

nothin'. It's me that done it. It's me, an' yo' aint goin' to tech me, neither!"

And then, before all that roomful of astounded people, that strange lad, half savage, half civilized, a hybrid—torn by vague consciousnesses of a morality which his race before him had forgotten, if ever known, slowly sank back on his bench—and wept.

Yes, he wept.

There was no other sound in that court. Seconds passed in awed silence. Then, at a slight motion of the judge's hand, two court attendants started to move toward him. Mawm Rukker, strangling with emotion, stood to his feet, a hand stretched out toward his boy. But swifter than any other movement was that of the girl Judith. She was running across the hardwood floor toward the boy; she was crouching at his side; she was clasping his head in her soft hands. And she was whispering, hoarsely:

"Galeg—Galeg—it's all a lie! . . . Tell them, it's a lie."

BUT the guard had reached him. Firmly, though with a certain gentleness, they lifted him to his feet. In a daze, he seemed, mindless of Judith's clinging hands, mindless of the people, of the jury upon whose twelve faces—so hard and unforgiving but a moment since—there was drops of moisture, mindless of the judge's stare. And still dazed and unresisting, he followed the two attendants out of the room, through the little door that leads to the narrow passage where prisoners pass. We heard the door close upon him. We heard Judith's sobbing. We heard Mawm Rukker's inarticulate groan.

And then—we heard the muffled roar of a shot. . . .

Frantically the two attendants tried to tell it; frantically and hysterically they tried.

"He's dead!" they cried in concert. "He's killed himself. He had a gun on him, and now he's dead."

And in the confused murmuring uproar which followed that tragic announcement, I could see the judge's lips shakily forming the syllables:

"Case—State against Mawm Rukker—dismissed. . . . Ruled—mistrial."

But it was a power greater, far, than that of any mere earthly judge, which had spoken; and the magistrate's unheard words were but a weak echo. . . .

A saint was born in that court-house. Let no Devil's advocate appear to challenge her sanctity; for if utter repentance, utter self-abnegation, utter self-sacrifice and humiliation, long service to humanity and infinite suffering can engender saintliness, that tragic instant in a worldly judge's court engendered Saint Judith.

For the crowd, the tragedy ended then. Blind souls, they saw nothing, for they had no eyes to see. What was it to those people—whose morbid curiosity had been sated, whose stupid arrogance had been stimulated, whose vanity had been whetted to witness the (to them) amusing drama of a man bereft, a son sacrificed, a woman humiliated. . . . What was it to them, I say, that this graying old man so out of place among them, should stalk slowly from the courtroom, his straight figure bent over with sorrow, bowed, broken?

How could any of them translate the simpler tragedy—the girl, that same girl whose honor they had heard stripped from her, whose naked soul they had snickered at—the girl reaching her hand after the old man, reaching out, touching his arm, saying:

"Pop . . . Oh, Pop—take me—with you. . . . Take Judy—"

They made way for her, through the pressing crowd. They stood aside for her. They lingered there, watching her, like hungry ghouls to feed upon dead spirits. They saw the old man shake her hand away and force his tired body onward. They saw her follow him, tears streaming down her face; they heard her cry out after him:

"Oh, Pop. . . . Oh, Pop, take me! I—I can't—"

And they heard the rumble of his voice when he turned; they heard it, and the fierce torture of the words as they burned his lips in the saying, and the smoldering embers in the heart of him sent an invisible odor of burning into the corridor, as Mawm Rukker said:

"Get yo' gone, wooman, dat yo' coom by no hurt from me. Yo' haf kilt mine Galeg!"

AYE, they saw and they heard, did that crowd; but it was only a play, only a thing done and said amongst them, to pass and forget, to mention, perhaps, over their coffee that night, saying:

"Well, it certainly served the little hussy right. A murderess, she is, as plain as daylight, too. *Imagine,* trying to make up to that old devil after— What a business! What an ugly business!"

An old man named Mawm Rukker strode through the streets of Hackensack, never stopping to wonder at the street-cars, fantastic things which he had never seen before; never stopping to see the crowd that whispered and pointed at him, never hearing the hushed murmurs:

"There he goes! . . . Mawm Rukker. . . . Keeper of the beasts—wild man of the mountain. . . . It's a wonder they let him go, at that!"

Through the streets he went, but solitary and bowed down, striding fast to free his feet of the very dust of civilization, striking off through the fringe of woods to the north, and disappearing in the trees whose branches let down and caressed him, for he was their own.

But it was a saint that he left behind him.

I found Judith—a little gray figure, she was, crouched against the banister of the great staircase in the court building, white-faced, a tear falling as though it were dew from her soul oozing out of her. She yielded to my arm, and together we went to my buggy, driving back to the Valley through the brisk air and the green fields.

"There's nothing I can say, Judith," I told her, "except that there's a home for you here in my lonely house—if you want it. You'll find work to do there, and it will help you."

She shook her head.

"Thank you, Doctor," she said. "But I can't stay there. I can't stay in the Valley. And I've plenty of work to do. My place is on the mountain—with my people. Mawm Rukker will need me now."

Then she trudged away, up the steep path that led to where the mountain's crest had been burned away, and I did not know then that this was a holy woman.

A SAD history, those next twenty years, but there was beauty in it, and a great lesson. I cannot write it here. I cannot write the vast volume that history would make. My story is done. My book is closed. That record is written in a greater Book than mine.

But out of that deep tragedy was born sunshine and goodness. It is true that the Jackson White settlement was rebuilt on the mountain. It is true that Mawm Rukker, an old man already, led his people back to the Houvenkopf, like Joshua leading Israel, and that the axes and knives of them cut new branches to build new cabins for their homes. And it is true that the girl Judith crept humbly into his cabin, silent, mouselike, alone.

They tell the story today in the Ramapos. They tell how Mawm Rukker would not speak, had never spoken to her. They tell how, with silent devotion, she cooked his food and split his wood and made his place clean, and nursed the man through a long sad life, but never a word was spoken between them, and that was for twenty years.

A saint, was Judith; and she gave of herself, in simple penitence. A little clapboard schoolhouse was built on the mountain's edge, and there Judith brought the Jackson children, daily, to listen to her soft voice. There she taught them the simple things she had learned in the mission school—things which, too quickly absorbed, had betrayed her: taught them with love and with understanding.

I COULD fill that volume with the story of civilization's march into the mountain, the building of its roads, the blooming of a golf-club where once the Northford mansion stood. I could tell you of the vast concrete knife, a new State highway, that slashed through the very heart of the Houvenkopf settlement, hewing a clean strip of gray past the doors of those mountain huts, all to the bewilderment of the little hill people, stripping them bare of their privacy, robbing them of their hiding-places, churning them, willy-nilly, into the maelstrom of a world which closed in around them.

All this and more I could write; but my book is ended. Myself, I have grown old—sick and old with waiting, with watching, with hoping. Who shall love a saint? Who shall love a holy woman? It is true, indeed, that no word of love was ever spoken between us, Judith and me; yet we both knew we were waiting.

And now it is over. . . .

Last night the wild dogs of the Houvenkopf set up their howling, and I knew that old Mawm Rukker was dead, had passed on and was united with Galeg, his son. The penance is over. Judith will be coming down from the mountain now, released from her vow. An old woman, she will be; but the soul of her will be a girl's soul.

Listen! Perhaps that is she even now—at my door. . . . At the door of my house, so long empty, so long hungry, waiting, waiting.

THE END

The Emperor

This story of the first iron-clad is one of the most dramatic in all the "Arms and Men" series.

By H. Bedford-Jones

"IN those days, France was shaking under the tramp of armies."

So said Etienne de Molnay, as we sat together one afternoon in the Collectors' Club and talked of cabbages and kings. Molnay was one of the stamp-collectors who infested the place; a slim, graceful man with a far-away look in his gentle eyes as though he were living back in the days of his grandfather, who had been some sort of government official under the third Napoleon.

"So my grandfather has said," he went on, fingering a soiled old envelope he had taken from his pocket and forgotten. "You see, Napoleon the Little, as he was eternally branded by Victor Hugo, had finally seized the throne, and in 1853 was preparing to prove to the world that he was as great as the first Napoleon. He was forming armies; he was gathering munitions; he was leaving no stone unturned to find new weapons, new arms, with which to overwhelm Europe. Well, he succeeded; and yet, by irony, Europe overwhelmed him, and he was remembered not for his new engines of war, but for the frightful cataclysm that he brought upon France."

I listened with a polite interest. Talk of Napoleon rather bored me, and so far as I knew, he had never brought forth any novel weapons of war. Suddenly Molnay recollected the envelope in his hand, and waved it at me excitedly.

"This is remarkable," he said. "Look! While Napoleon was president, in 1852, before he seized the throne, this letter was sent to him. Merely addressed to *'M. le Prince-President, Paris,'* and sent collect. Anyone could send a letter collect to the head of the state. It was charged to the office, as this notation in the corner affirms. But who do you suppose sent this letter? It turned up in a stamp collection. It has no stamp, naturally; but collectors subscribe to anything. Well, the letter was sent by Pierre Meurdoc."

He seemed to think the words would make an impression. They did not.

"Never heard of him," I said. "What did he do?"

"He changed the art of war," he replied. "You see this envelope? It is, no doubt, the very one in which he sent his letter to the Prince-President, introducing himself and his idea, his invention! It was this letter which altered the world's history, my friend. Do you wonder that I treasure it?"

"To be frank, I do," was my smiling

Meurdoc talked to her about his ship, and about his letter to the President.

response. "You see, I know nothing about him. I never heard of his invention."

"You hear of it every day," said he, slowly. "The world has heard of it ever since 1853. . . . But there—it is not extraordinary that you never heard of him, perhaps. The tale is not widely known. And parts of it—the strange and horrible finale—are even less known. My grandfather was one of the few who knew the whole truth, and from him I had it. It was he who went aboard the old *Glorieux*, the frigate that served as target in the bay beyond Mont St. Michel, and who found the end of the story there."

He was silent for a space, his eyes thoughtful and dreamy. Then suddenly he awakened.

"You know," he said abruptly, "there were two facets to the character of Napoleon. He was studious in all the art of war, and he was of unbridled passion where women were concerned. He had his mistresses; also, he had his private arsenal where inventions were furthered for the sake of France.

"Well, this letter,"—and he tapped the envelope in his hand,—"was sent him while he was still President. It reached him a day or two after he made himself Emperor. No doubt it lay disregarded for a long time until his attention could be drawn from greater things. But the man who sent it was an interesting man, my friend, an honorable man, a man of gifts and personality. I wish I could make you see him as my grandfather knew him. You see, he lived in the provinces, on the border between Normandy and Brittany—"

PIERRE MEURDOC lived on the Bréton coast, in the old house that had once been a manor of the abbots of Mont St. Michel. Out there in the bay lifted that incredible island, of so wondrous architecture, like a fairy palace rising from the sea, that it was known in older days by the name of the Marvel.

Meurdoc was one of those men with little money, whose family ran back to the Conquest; the name was old and historic. He was twenty-six and useless; a handsome black-haired dreamer, a poet blind to superficial things, with fantastic notions about life and living. So said the Bréton peasants, yet they respected him because he was very honorable, very brave and gentle, with a peculiarly feminine tenderness lurking in his lustrous black eyes. This, perhaps, made the sequence of things all the more horrible.

He refused to kill bird or beast, and used to tramp the woods and shores with

an unloaded fowling-piece. He would sit by the hour watching the long glistening sands when the tide ran out and the folk were digging cockles, or the rush and trample of waves when it came in. You know how it comes around Mont St. Michel—rapidly, faster than a horse can run, sweeping in around the miles of bare sands very suddenly.

Many a man has been engulfed there. The cannon captured from the English six centuries ago, still at the gate of the Mont today, were taken this way when the besiegers were caught by the foaming tide.

NOR was Pierre Meurdoc alone on these walks. With him, frequently, was Gloria de Brion, last of that family. She lived alone in the ruined house of her fathers with an ancient godmother.

A girl unutterably lovely as a fairy, fantastically dressed in odd garments, living by hazard, but with a wild, fierce heart beneath her rags. The peasants feared her because she had flaming red hair, which they took to be a mark of the devil in that country. She, too, dreamed dreams as she walked and sat on the shores with Meurdoc; but if she shared his dreams, he did not share hers.

Fascination on her part, no doubt; but on his, a deep and lofty nobility of love, with all the depth and height of the Cross itself. They would recite the strangely moving verses of Alfred de Musset by the hour, as they gazed across the shining sands at the sweet fairy pinnacle of the Mont.

But marriage? In the provinces this was no light matter, and neither of them had money. Meurdoc's lands could be mortgaged; but this would leave them with heavy debt. It was a hopeless situation, had they been set on marriage, but what care young, wild hearts for the forms of life? They exchanged their vows to the distant marvel of St. Michel, they loved, they lived!

One day Meurdoc took some rabbits and young pigs to market at Avranches. He came back, to the utter despair of his two old servants, not with the materials they needed to stop the gaps in the roof, but with the model of a ship, a frigate. A very handsome thing it was, but this would not keep out the rain.

Upon this ship model he worked long and patiently, getting the blacksmith at the village forge to help him with what he wanted made. Impulsive, ardent, fantastic, a boy despite his years, with a natural gift for figures and calculations, he said nothing to Gloria of his scheme until it was finished.

"La Glorieux," the peasants called her, the Glorious One, in their hard-bitten scorn; but Pierre Meurdoc called her this in worship and adoration. The name went with her free, proud carriage, had she been a fine lady in silks and furs; it went with her slightly chilly blue eyes, her loveliness, the fine high set of her head and neck. Lovely and glorious, uncontrolled, and with a wild fierceness in her heart to escape her life of poverty and oblivion. Do you know this hunger of the heart? Sometimes it will lead to strange and terrible things, like all hunger.

A visiting artist, charmed by Meurdoc's old ruined chateau, by the girl's beauty, by the high stately courtesy of Meurdoc himself, had painted her. He had done a miniature on ivory of her face and neck and shoulders, as a gift to Pierre Meurdoc, and this rested always upon the young man's heart.

And one day a weary and blasé man getting on in years, one of the most famous of the old exquisites, a very noted writer of cruel tales, had wandered down the Bréton coast, had seen the girl, had exchanged words with her and given her his card. Barbey d'Aurevilly, who had plumbed all the depths of evil and found them empty and sad. These little things were threads in the plot and trap of destiny, for destiny bears a frightful hatred toward noble and honorable souls.

AT length his work on the ship model was finished. He had stripped all the sails from the little frigate, and now took it in hand, slung fowling-piece over his shoulder, and went through the woods past the Brion homestead. There he whistled and hooted like an owl, in the old fashion of the Bréton Chouâns, and the girl came running to join him, her red hair flowing wild in the sunlight like rich ruddy gold, her wide blue eyes all ablaze.

"To the shore!" said he gayly, when they had kissed. "To show you what I've been working on these long nights, *ma mie*. Down to the little bay where the water is deep when the tide's in. It should be in now. You see the ship?"

"A ship without sails?" she said, laughing. "You're a boy again, to sail toy ships? But what are those queer things on the sides?"

"Plates of iron," he said proudly. "I've

worked out a way to fasten them securely to the wood. Wait, and I'll show you. Come along!"

"Ah!" And she sighed as she fell in beside him. "If you were starting for Paris and said that, you'd not have to say it twice!"

"That remains to be seen," he replied, smiling. "Paris be damned! I'd as soon live in the moon as in Paris."

"At least, we'd have plenty of cheese to eat in the moon, little boy!"

SO they came to a bight of the shore below Pontorson, whence at low tide one might cross the bared sands to the Mont. The tide was in, and the miracle of the glorious islet lay opposite, glinting in the sunlight. The brown sails of fishing-boats broke the blue water, and afar on the horizon lifted the white topsails of a frigate bound in for St. Malo.

When they had settled down near the water, Meurdoc showed her the iron-bound model of the warship.

"To figure out the exact thickness of the plates, proportionately, so they'll not sink her in the water, was a job," he said proudly. "But it's done. She's all sheathed in iron, save the deck."

"But to what end?" the girl asked.

"I'll show you." Barefoot now, he ran down to the water and splashed in, and put the model to float there. She swam neatly, nicely, as he came back and picked up his gun.

"Now, my dear, fancy this a frigate floating under the batteries, and this fowling-piece the cannon of the batteries that could blow her out of the water—if she were of wood only!"

He fired. The gun crashed; the white powder-smoke spurted and lifted. Under the impact of the shot, the model frigate reeled and rocked; but when Meurdoc brought the ship back, she showed no sign of hurt save in marks of lead on iron.

"And," queried the girl, "just what's the reason of all this?"

"Proof that I've discovered something!" he exclaimed eagerly. "Look you! Suppose France were to sheathe her ships in such a cuirass of iron! Then English or Turkish cannon could not harm them. They could laugh at any enemy. You see?"

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Well, my dear, France is a large place; and this corner of the bay is a very little place."

"That's a queer answer," he said, staring at her in disappointment.

"It's not an answer, but an observation," she said merrily. "But Pierre, this is really a discovery. Why don't you write the Prince-President about it? Could you tell just how thick the iron must be to serve on a real ship? Could you assure him it's really practical?"

"Yes, of course. Write him, the President? I'd never thought of that," said Meurdoc simply. "He'd pay no attention to a provincial, a rustic like me. The name of Muerdoc means nothing outside Brittany."

"At least, it's a name," she said in her enigmatic way. "Write him. Send the letter with collect charges—one does that to the President. Then he'll pay more heed to it, if it's cost him something."

Meurdoc burst into a laugh, and assented. That same night, indeed, he spent hours writing the letter, and next day sent it off in the post; but for a long, long time nothing happened.

The winter passed, the spring drew in, the world opened again. Often Meurdoc talked with La Glorieux about his ship, his letter to the President, and laughed about it. The President was the Emperor now. Another dream gone glimmering, said he with a shrug.

He and the girl lived in their own little world; even when the spring opened all the wide world, it was not for them. A savage place, these Bréton woods. Savage people, were those who lived in them. Savage, uncouth, ignorant, in all these back districts.

WITHOUT warning, suddenly, came the letter. The village postman bore it reverently, proudly, curiously; the massive envelope bore the round stamped "Cabinet de l'Empereur." A letter from the Emperor himself, for Pierre Meurdoc! Why, the thing was incredible! Word of it was flashed all over the countryside.

Meurdoc came running, bareheaded, letter in hand, to the old Brion house. He thrust it at La Glorieux, incoherent, excited, breathless.

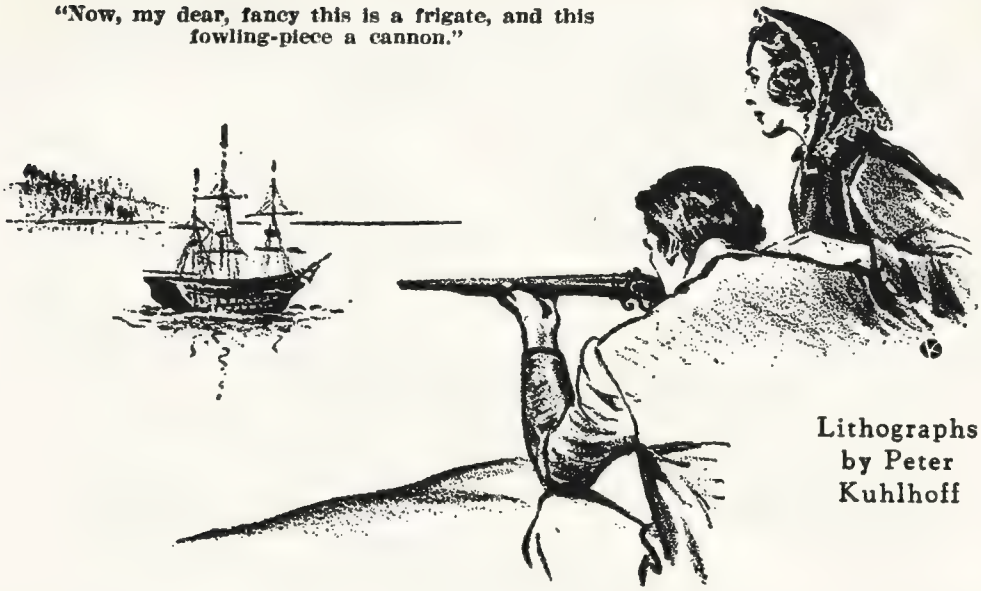
"Read! A reply! From the secretary of Napoleon! He must see me in Paris. The Emperor himself is interested in my idea, do you comprehend? Experts have laughed at it, but he is interested. He sends for me, for me, Pierre Meurdoc! To Paris!"

Her red lips parted, her blue eyes surveyed him enigmatically.

"And you?"

He sobered. "I go to Paris, certainly.

"Now, my dear, fancy this is a frigate, and this fowling-piece a cannon."



Lithographs by Peter Kuhlhoff

I can mortgage the chateau to old Courtois, the miser; then, if I succeed, no matter. And if I fail, no matter! But I shan't fail. I know what I'm about. The dream's come true! Glorieux—embrace me!"

She embraced him, but not in the manner of dreams come true. . . .

Lands mortgaged for a song; post-chaise rolling on the yellow roads among the apple-blossoms of Normandy; a Meurdoc hesitant, clad in new awkward garments, at the gates of the Tuileries, with the letter in his hand for passport. And so to the private secretary of the Emperor, who gazed at him, startled.

"*Mon Dieu, monsieur!* You have not breathed word of your errand to anyone?"

"Certainly not!" Meurdoc exclaimed. "Why?"

"My friend, it is of the utmost secrecy. You must let no word of it pass your lips until His Majesty has talked with you. He desires to see you in private. We'll make an appointment—Hm, I'll send a carriage for you at eight this evening. He's free for half an hour then."

Meurdoc clasped his hand. "Then, monsieur—he approves of my idea!"

"No one else does, apparently," said the other dryly. "Hope for nothing, I warn you. He will have sharp questions to ask."

Tonight at eight!

A small private salon in the palace. Meurdoc waiting, choked by excitement, then springing to his feet as the door opened. A small man in heavy uniform, goatee and mustache still black, eyes sharp and shrewd.

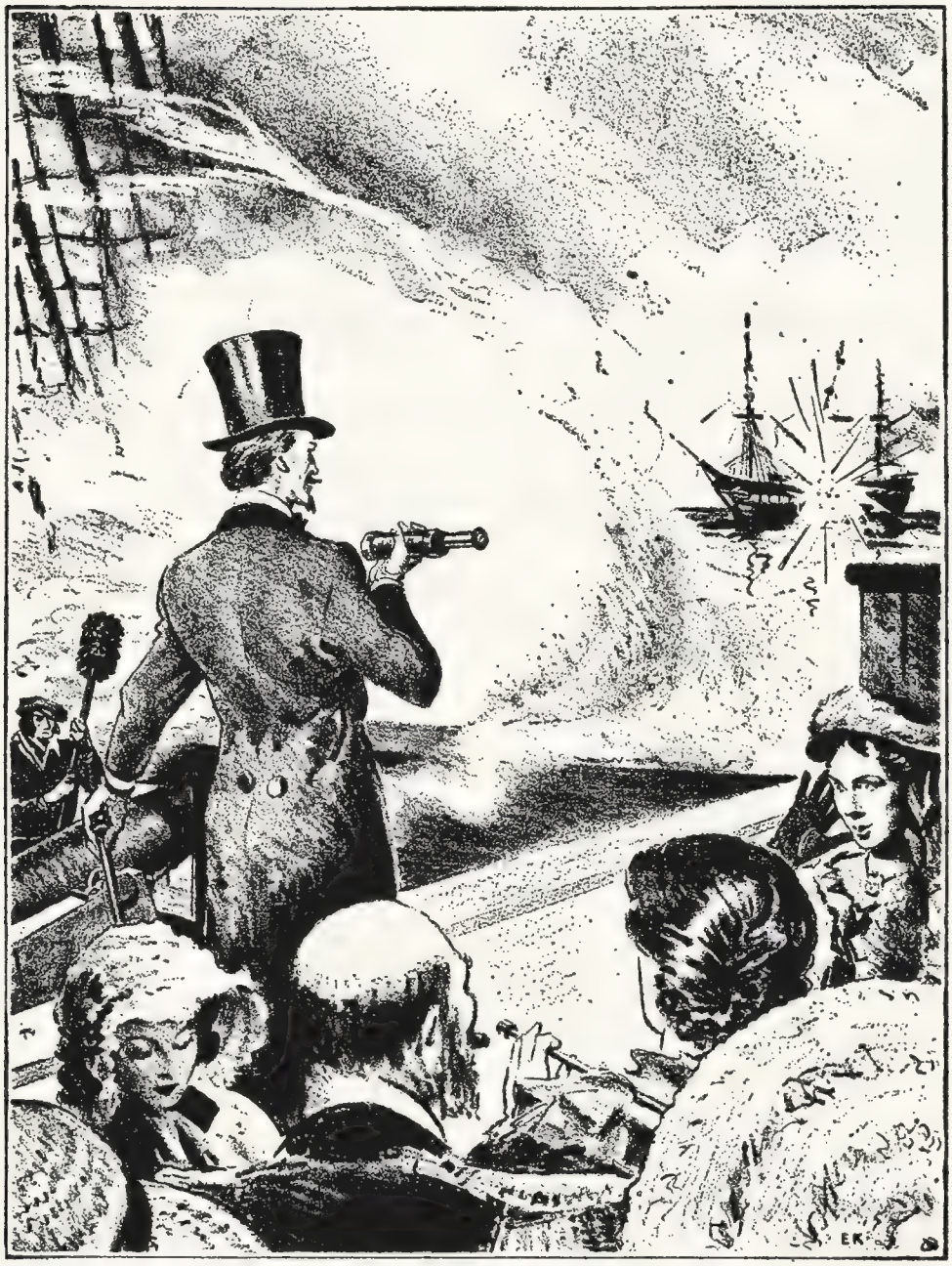
"Well, monsieur! Your name has a long place in the annals of France,"—and the Emperor smiled. "Bah! No ceremony, I insist. I've spent too many years in prison to stand on ceremony with men of brains. We're alone. This is a business affair. Your idea, monsieur, is flatly impossible—according to all my naval construction experts."

All this while the shrewd, sharp eyes appraising the young man, that high forehead, that singular look of nobility and frank simplicity, those lustrous eyes, the firm lips and chin, the acute intelligence, the red country cheeks.

AND now questions, thick and fast and to the point.

"With such a weight, there is the handling of the ship to consider; out of the question, I'm told. What say you? The attachment of an iron cuirass such as you propose—a most important point. The thickness of this iron; if sufficiently thick to resist the balls of cannon, will it not actually sink the ship as I'm told it will do?"

Hands like ice, Meurdoc conquered his self-consciousness. He took the arguments one by one and tore them to shreds. He answered the questions with assurance. All from a theoretical viewpoint? Not at all. He spoke of his model, of how he had tested and worked



Broadside upon broadside roared. From the target echoed a clang as the solid shot banged against her iron cuirass.

with it, of how he had fired his gun at it. He had an answer, ready and prompt, for the most searching queries; if he had none, he invented one and chanced results.

And Napoleon listened until he had finished.

"Hm! Monsieur, you almost convince me. Yet nothing purely theoretical can be convincing. There must be an actual test, an actual ship, an actual broadside of cannon fired. Can you supply this?"

"I, Your Majesty?" stammered Meurdoc. "I have no frigates, no cannon—"

Napoleon laughed. "You mistake me. France can supply all this; rather, I can do so. This affair must remain utterly secret, between you and me alone, you comprehend? Hm! There is that old frigate at St. Malo, condemned—the *Glorieux*."

"The *Glorieux!*" burst out Meurdoc, his face all ablaze. "Oh, what a favorable omen! *La Glorieux,* indeed! Her very name—"

He broke off in acute embarrassment. Smiling, Napoleon inquired, and Meurdoc drew out the miniature and explained how matters lay. For a long moment, those shrewd, heavy-lidded eyes rested upon the painted likeness of Gloria de Brion; then he handed it back.

"Monsieur, I congratulate you. Now, here is what I propose—first, are you free to act in this matter? Have you a salary, a profession, to tie you down?"

"I have nothing, Your Majesty. I mortgaged the lands and chateau of Meurdoc to come here."

The sharp gaze searched his face as though in wonder.

"Very well. I'll supply everything from my private purse. You shall have *La Glorieux* and a commission giving you absolute power to convert her, to arm her with this iron cuirass. It can't be done at Brest; I want no prying eyes from the shipyards to see the invention. Do it at St. Malo, work with private armorers. Your expenses and salary will be ample. My secretary will arrange everything. See him in the morning and go forth to conquer destiny, young man! When you are ready, send word. I'll come to St. Malo myself, and arrange the tests. Understood?"

UNDERSTOOD? It was dream come true. It could not even be grasped, much less understood, in a moment.

Behold then, Meurdoc writing feverishly that night, a long, long letter to Gloria de Brion; marriage, life together, dreams realized! And glowing words of the Emperor, of his shrewdness, his kindness, his affability. All was to be settled on the morrow, then home like an arrow, marriage, a journey to St. Malo together!

But the morrow brought delays. Conferences, details to iron out, red tape to be cut. To place even a condemned old frigate in the hands of the new dictator, was no easy matter; especially as the reason for doing it remained unknown. French officials held up their hands in horror; the ministry of the Marine nearly had apoplexy.

Not until days had passed, was everything adjusted, and then Meurdoc, with fat purse and future assured, set off posthaste for the west. Home again, to throw gold at his two old servants, then to rush to the ruins of the Brion villa, aflame with the elation of triumph.

But no Gloria. Instead, a letter awaiting him with the deaf, half-blind old godmother left alone in her dotage. Meurdoc read it with stupefaction, then with joy.

"An old friend of my father's from Paris has carried me off—a real fairy godfather who came unexpectedly out of nowhere. . . . The horizon is opening for me, my dear, as it is for you. A month, two months, and you won't know me when you see me again. I swear! I rejoice for your success; it shall become a triumph. Expect me in St. Malo in two months. With all my heart, now and forever!"

Meurdoc kissed the letter passionately, sighed in a despondent feeling of empty abandon, then forced himself to realize that if the world had so suddenly opened wide for her, she had done right to go and make sure of its benefits. This was her due. Only a selfish clod could object. And yet it hurt, for she had loomed large in his dreams of the immediate future. But after all, two months—pouf!

He rushed on to St. Malo, rushed into the work before him, plunged at it with a feverish intensity. He labored day and night like a madman, getting his plates of iron shaped, getting them in place. Two months! Within this time, he must achieve triumph, ere she came to St. Malo.

Letters came; not frequent, but reassuring, dazzling, incredible. She had been presented at court. She had met the Emperor himself; he had even spoken of Meurdoc, in whom he had great hopes, to her. It was wonderful, marvelous!

MEURDOC stole precious time to write long replies, and so back to his labor. Three weeks, a month, six weeks drove past, and the cuirass of iron was creeping over the old frigate. He wrote the Emperor. All would be in readiness whenever the test could be made. He wrote Gloria. She must be present, must be sure to witness his triumph; and on the heels of this, marriage. There would be no hindrance now. Triumph was inevitable, and would mean success, fame, wealth!

Oh, he was living in an iridescent bubble of dream these days, yet getting things done, proving point by point all he had thought out in theory! But no

answer came to his last letters. The Emperor made no reply. Gloria made no reply.

Then, one day when Meurdoc was hard at work in the bay where the old frigate was moored, a very elegant gentleman was brought out by a boatman. A man of forty or so, his features lined with dissipation and high living, yet emanating a certain authority, a masterful charm. Meurdoc, wiping the sweat out of his eyes, faced him angrily.

"Your business, monsieur? By what right are you here?"

The other smiled, and beckoned him aside where none could hear.

"I am sent to discuss arrangements with you. My card, monsieur."

MEURDOC glanced at the pasteboard with a shock. This was the Count de Morny—half-brother of the Emperor!

"Your pardon, M. le Comte—"

"Say, no more, I beg; your attitude was entirely correct. His Majesty approves all you have done. Four days from now the test is to be made. Can you be ready?"

Meurdoc's face lit up. "Ah! I could be ready in four hours! Four days is ample. The Emperor is coming here?"

"He is not," Morny said dryly. They went down to the cabin of the old frigate, and there talked in private. The financier and politician spoke without reserve.

"His Majesty goes to Brest incognito. Two steam frigates are waiting there. They will be off St. Malo the fourth day from now. His presence will not be known or suspected; every precaution will be taken. Can this ironclad ship sail?"

"With a crew, yes."

"I have authority. She will sail out on the fourth day, meet the two frigates, and proceed with them up the bay toward Granville. Not too close to Mont St. Michel, because of the shallows. It is a lonely, empty place, this bay. This ship will be there abandoned, and the two frigates will open fire at close range, so that the effect of the shot can be observed. Bad weather may cause a change of plan, but nothing else. We cannot go to sea for the test. There are a number of ladies in the party, and we desire all to be kept in calm water."

"And the crew?"

"There are several ships in harbor here. I'll send men aboard, with officers who can be trusted."

So it was arranged. Sheathed now in an iron cuirass, only her deck left unprotected, the *Glorieux* was made ready for her last ride. For, win or lose, she was condemned.

Summer breezes, fair smooth sea, day after day; but Gloria came not, nor any word from her, so that Meurdoc firmly put her out of his thoughts until this matter should be ended. And the fourth day dawned fair and bright, with gentle winds offshore.

With mid-morning, the frigate drew out of the old port, passed the frowning cannon and the city, and swept into the bay. Morny stood with Pierre Meurdoc on her deck, and the officers wondered that she sailed as well as ever; the iron sheathing made little or no difference in her handling.

Over the horizon grew the billowy plumes of smoke—the two promised frigates coasting up from Brest. The *Glorieux* stood out to meet them. Signals were made and exchanged; on the quarterdeck of one frigate fluttered gay bits of color. The Emperor would be there, Morny said dryly, where the ladies were.

All three ships hove to. A boat came dancing over the water. The captain of the *Glorieux* descended into her, to get his instructions about the test. Morny and Pierre Meurdoc accompanied him.

On the frigate's deck now; a smallish, imperial figure without uniform meeting them, greeting Morny with great affability, casting an eye of query and a smile on the waiting Meurdoc. Then the latter was speaking with Napoleon while instructions were being arranged among the officers—speaking with him, until, looking past to the quarterdeck, Meurdoc saw a figure there at the rail.

A figure, a face; and with wild boyish impulse he turned from the Emperor and went dashing aft, a name on his lips.

"Gloria!"

IT was she indeed, laughing, radiant, unutterably beautiful; a lady now, gayly dressed, glinting with jewels. Meurdoc stood face to face for a moment, staring.

"Almost I failed to recognize you!" he cried joyfully. "So this is why you didn't write me; it was to be a surprise, eh?"

He held out his arms, but she cast a glance at the amused ladies and gentlemen around, and shook her head.

"Not now, not now, Pierre! Here—I

had a letter ready to send you. Take it; and think as well of me as you can, my dear. I am so sorry!"

She took a letter from her bodice, thrust it into his hand, and rejoined the others. But Meurdoc, staring after her, was as though turned to ice. Then, slowly, he left the quarterdeck. The eyes of the Emperor were upon him, cold and chilling eyes, but he paid no heed to anything. The letter was in his pocket. He dared not open it. He was afraid to touch it. He was lost to all around, for in the girl's eyes he had read what turned all his triumph to ashes.

And the letter, he knew well, would confirm the blow. To read it, he must be alone.

Seeing nothing, aware of nothing around him, he descended into the small boat. The captain followed him, spoke to him; but he returned no answer, and the other shrugged. They regained the *Glorieux,* and now the three frigates headed up the bay a few miles, with the land a blue edge to the dancing, glittering water, and a distant dot that was the shining spire of Mont St. Michel's masonry.

Back on the quarterdeck where the ladies laughed and jested, the Emperor spoke with Gloria de Brion, spoke apart and low-voiced. She shrugged lightly.

"Why not? He had to know. This was the best time, perhaps; he'll have other things to busy himself about. No?"

Napoleon smiled, pinched her cheek, met her wide blue eyes for a moment, then turned to join the naval officers at the rail. The *Glorieux* had drawn far ahead of them and now lay hove to, her canvas brailed, boats under her rail taking off her crew.

THROUGH a glass, the Emperor inspected those men, those boats, the emptying deck, as the two frigates luffed and the whistles blew, and ports fell open and the guns were shotted and made ready. Boats left the side of the target. All were well away except one, which remained at her ladder. The Emperor laid aside his glass.

"The signals?"

"When they wave a flag, we fire a blank gun. At that signal they must leave, and we open fire."

The Emperor lifted his glass again. His face was chill and cold.

"There is the signal, Captain. Fire the gun."

The President who became Emperor.

"But, sire, one boat remains—"

"Fire the gun."

An order barked, was passed forward. A lower-deck gun roared, with a smear of smoke dissolved on the wind. The one boat remaining by the target hastily decamped, her men pulling hard. The officers around glanced one at another, then at Napoleon. He spoke quietly.

"Open fire, Captain."

A bugle leaped out silvern on the sunlight. The blast reëchoed from the other frigate. Then the deck shivered and shook with thunder, the ship heeled to the recoil, the ladies cried out in terror, bursts of white smoke filled the air.

Back and forth the two frigates steamed. Broadside upon broadside roared and rocked the daylight. From the target, so close that details could be clearly discerned, echoed a yammering clang as the solid shot banged against her iron cuirass. Her small boats, circling widely to be out of danger, waited to be picked up.

The masts of the target were shattered. Shot plowed her decks, smashed everything to kindling aboard her that could be reached; but from the watching officers came mutters of amazement. The hull itself was unhurt. Few shot, perhaps none, seemed to penetrate that iron cuirass, or even to dent it appreciably.

Then the roaring thunder of gunfire died out, the bugles and the whistles shrilled, the two frigates lost way. Boats were put out, for inspection of the target. But ere they filled with men, one of the boats from the target came dashing frantically in under the counter, and the captain of the *Glorieux* shouted up at those above:

"Why don't you answer our signals? We've been trying to make you see them. We did not wave any flag! M. Meurdoc is still aboard that hell—we had to leave him! He had shut himself into the cabin—why, nobody knows. He refused to come out—"

The frigate's captain looked at the Emperor, met those cold, chilling, steady eyes, and read their message aright—with a mental salute.

"You mistake!" he shouted down. "We distinctly saw your flag waving!"

This mental acuity on his part made him, very shortly, a rear admiral.

Now boats pulled hard for the shot-rocked target, raced for her, men bending to the oars with a will. Under all that cannonade, she had scarcely suffered damage. Only in one place, at the very stern, where the plates of iron had been badly adjusted, had the shot done any damage.

An entire broadside had smashed into her there, wrecking everything in the stern cabins, turning it into a chaos of splintered ruin. And amid this ruin, they found the wreckage of a man, with a torn scrap of paper clenched on one hand.

SO the story ended. Mont St. Michel and the gleaming bay died away; I was back in the Collectors' Club again, looking at my friend Etienne de Molnay, the envelope still in his hand.

"In 1855, during the Crimean War," he went on slowly, "three French armored ships engaged the Kinburn Forts and proved their worth. That was the first use of the ironclad in war. Thus you see, my argument was proven. Pierre Meurdoc changed the course of all history."

"But what of the man himself? And of the girl, Gloria?" I asked, interested in the human factors in this drama.

He smiled wryly. "My grandfather picked up what was left of him; it had honorable burial. As to La Glorieux—why worry?" He shrugged lightly. "Her own dream came true, her own horizon opened to her; and if Napoleon the Little had anything on his conscience, he certainly never spoke of it in later days. Nor did his mistress. Nor did his Empress."

Which, I thought, closed the matter very fittingly.

The next story in this great series takes us back to America and the introduction of the revolver.

LANK PARLEY sat on his piazza watching the stars, brooding, thinking: "If Moloch had only lived!"

The afterglow still shone on the snowy San Gabriels, more radiant than the rising stars, which seemed wan and exhausted from climbing over such high mountains. It was going to be cold enough to hurt the new bloom, but Lank Parley did not care. His grove was worthless, for since Moloch's death he had neglected it, let it run to seed. He sat here surveying the ruins, the oranges scarred by katydids, puffy from frost, strewn on the ground by the winds.

"If Moloch had lived, I'd have tried one more year to make the grove pay." That was what Lank told everybody—including himself.

A girl drove a buckboard up the road. She stopped at his driveway and got out. As her face came into the lamplight of the ranch-house door, Lank's heart leaped. He was astonished, not because she came here alone, but because of her lithe wiry body and the burned beauty of her face. Worshiping her from afar, and for many years, Lank was always astounded that such a girl should exist.

Lank got to his gangling feet, and stepped down from the piazza, covering all three steps at once.

"I was just thinking about you, Hallie—Miss Trilles!" He had really been thinking of Moloch, but he said: "Whenever I think of my horse, I say to myself: 'Hallie Trilles lost her mare—a good mare, almost as good as Moloch. We have something in common. We ought to console each other.'"

"Mr. Parley," the girl broke in calmly, "is this yours?" She held out a Spanish rowel of beaten silver.

Bloom

A specially attractive story by a new writer who knows a lot about horses—and people.

By
KENNETH PERKINS

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

He examined it and chuckled: "Yes. It's mine. What luck! I don't mean getting it back. I mean losing it, so you could find it and then ride ten miles just to bring it to me. Sit down and I'll boil some coffee."

"You're sure it's yours?"

Lank sensed by this insistent way of hers that the visit might not be entirely romantic. His voice changed slightly, unconsciously. "What's it matter, anyway? Yes, I'm sure—I know it's mine, because I tried to get a Mex silversmith to fix this point that's busted off."

He was going to add that if she wanted it and thought it was such an important thing, she could keep it—he'd give it to her. But he saw a very queer flash in her eyes. She looked at him up and down, steadied her look on his face.

He wished suddenly that he had raked up the bark and palm-branches. Even though he was not working the ranch, he was living here.

And now he heard her saying: "You've sunk rather low, Parley."

He stiffened, but then realized she was saying what everybody said. Moloch's death had taken the heart out of him. He had tried the solace of red-eye; he had loafed and brooded.

After a painful pause he answered her. "You're the first one that seems to be worried about me. When Moloch was winning those trotting races at San Berdoo, I had lots of friends. They'd lend me money for fertilizer and water-assessments, knowing Moloch could never lose. It takes money to grow oranges, and that horse supplied it. Even the bank stopped lending when he got out of his barn and busted his neck in that cistern yonder."

"I can understand your getting in the dumps and taking to gambling and loafing," the girl said almost sympathetically. "You Parleys were all gamblers, same as my menfolks. But," she added in a level voice, "I can't believe you'd take to horse-stealing."

SHE could not see the effect of this on his face, for the light from the door was behind him. But she heard the slight gasp. She knew that if she had been a man, he would have knocked her down.

She summoned all her courage. "That rowel of yours was found in our corral the night my mare was stolen."

The silence made her heart thump. It seemed a deliberate measure of time on his part, eloquent of his anger as well as his helplessness. It was as if she had struck him when his hands were tied.

He made a cigarette slowly, licked it shut and said: "I guess it's not my rowel, after all. I never went near your ranch. And never will, either."

Hallie went on steadily: "None of us ever dreamed the rowel could be yours. That's why so many months have passed. But today something happened which gave us a pretty good hunch—"

"Reckon we better say good night," Lank interrupted. "If I wanted to be a horse-thief, I'd pick out something better than that mare of yours. I saw her in her best race. She only did the last quarter in thirty."

"Twenty-nine," the girl corrected automatically, and then checked herself. "Mr. Parley, do you mind telling me

something: Where does your *mozo* disappear, for weeks at a time, which I hear he's been doing the last year?"

"Who? Old Soggy? I can't pay his wages any more. So he's taken to prospecting up in the Calico hills. Comes home once in a while when he's dry and wants a spree—"

He checked himself, for the girl's question struck him as being very significant. He remembered vaguely that his old *mozo* had asked him for those sacks of corn that were left over in Moloch's stall. Another time he wanted some sulphate of iron "for a new-fangled gold-assay." Lank also remembered that Soggy had always fancied that pair of Spanish rowels.

"What's old Soggy got to do with this game you're rolling?" he asked the girl.

"He was seen heading down here today after sundown. And he was leading a stove-up bay mare that looked as if she'd cracked her hoofs wintering in the mountains." She saw that Lank was holding the smoke in his mouth, not breathing. "I came here for one thing, tonight, Parley: I want my mare."

"Going to just stand here till you get her?"

"That's what I'm doing."

"What'll your uncle think of that?"

"He's up the street at the Comas grove, waiting for me to get through talking to you."

"I wish he'd come with you—and called me what you called me," Lank said significantly.

"I expected you'd figure that's the best way out—to talk smoky."

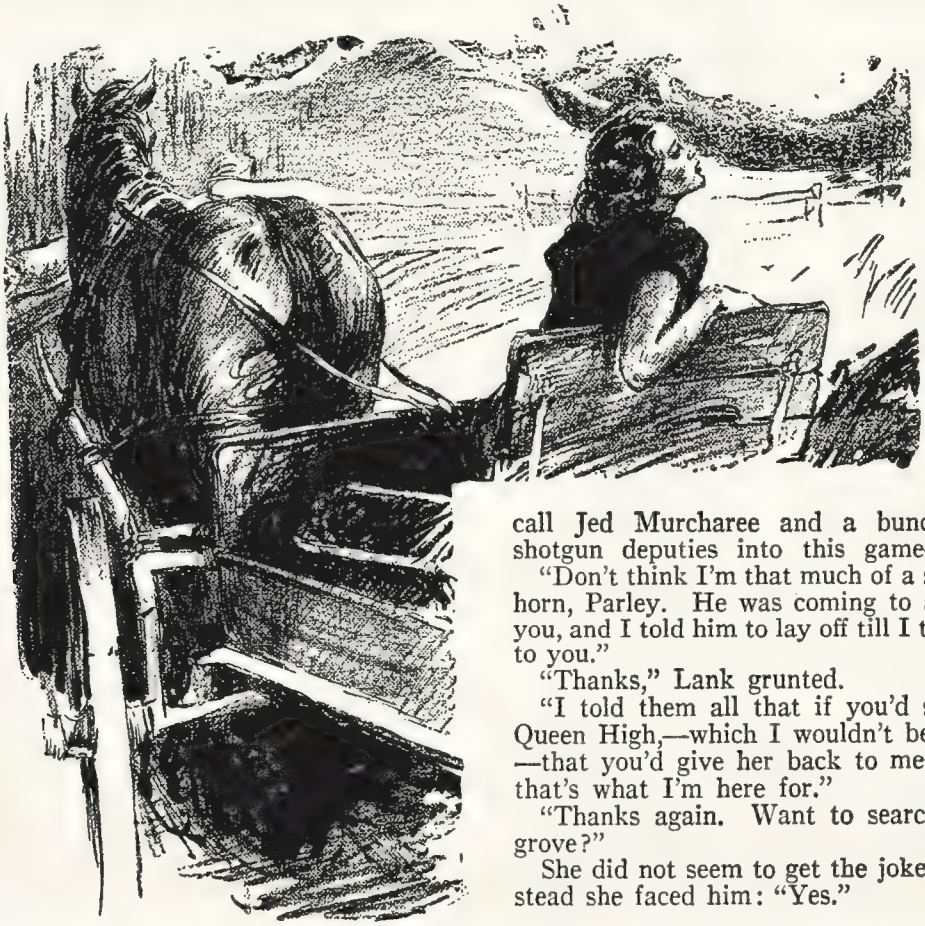
"Oh, no. If I was a rustler, I wouldn't fight. I'd run."

"Then you'd be making a mistake. It'll interest you to know that Jed Murcharee and some of his deputies are cooling their saddles down at the lemon grove on the south."

"Well, of all the little hellcats!" Lank exploded. "You mean you've surrounded my ranch!"

"I want my mare."

Lank swallowed, then grinned. "A girl can get away with this—calling me a rustler. I mean a hunky little girl like you. I won't even get mad. It's fun seeing your eyes blaze. But when you



call Jed Murcharee and a bunch of shotgun deputies into this game—"

"Don't think I'm that much of a shorthorn, Parley. He was coming to arrest you, and I told him to lay off till I talked to you."

"Thanks," Lank grunted.

"I told them all that if you'd stolen Queen High,—which I wouldn't believe,—that you'd give her back to me. And that's what I'm here for."

"Thanks again. Want to search the grove?"

She did not seem to get the joke. Instead she faced him: "Yes."

"All right, damn it! Come on."

He stalked across the palm-branches and mildewed oranges, got a lantern at the oil-shed, then stepped into the rich green gloom of the grove.

She followed, realizing slowly that she had come merely to prove to Murcharee that the rumors about Lank Parley were unfounded. And Lank sensed this, hoped it was true. She had not come to insult him. Her visit was a good deed. She was actually bucking some men who wanted to lynch him. The whole Valley had been in a furor when Hallie Trilles' mare was stolen, and even Lank Parley himself had sworn that the thief would get what any rustler got in the old days. Everyone knew Hallie and liked her. Her family, like the Parleys, had come over the old Mormon Trail to settle the San Bernardino Valley. They had raised stock before they turned the sage plains into orange groves. . . . Lank saw it all clearly now. Hallie was on his side!

From the central point of the grove—which was a tree with its thermometer and electric alarm to warn of a freeze—the rows of trees gave the optical illusion of radiating in every direction, such was the pattern of their planting. From here the entire ranch was visible. How could a mare be hidden here?

AT the end of one vista a barn tipped crazily because of the winter's flood which had undermined it. Another vista ended at the chicken-coops in the lee of the windbreak. A shed for firewood, smudge-oil, spraying cans, clippers, pickers' bags, leaned against the main house. In the lucid darkness above a tank-house, the windmill, instead of creaking in movement, sang with taut wings and wire. Lank used to hide his liquor in the shed beneath, so that Soggy would not find it. If Soggy had come to the ranch today, according to the rumor, he might have stopped to hunt for a jug of red-eye. The possibility occurred to Lank, because he heard a noise in the tank-house as he led the girl past it. He halted, turned.

It was not, however, a noise made by a man, but by a horse. Why a horse should wander into a place like this, Lank could not imagine. It was a damp, cold hovel, filled with sacks that had once held guano and loam and marl. The floor was mucky from the last flood.

As the girl waded behind him in the cover crop, Lank pulled open the jammed door, heard a whinny.

As the girl's face came into the lamplight of the ranch-house door, Lank Parley's heart leaped.

Yes, it was a horse—a bay mare, gaunted, lop-eared, weary—and in foal!

Hallie Trilles came to the door, gasped—and the gasp turned to a low heart-rending moan. She staggered in and threw her arms about the mare's drooping neck. The pudgy, thorn-bitten nose puffed, gave a snort, smelled the gentle brown hand, and nickered. Queen High, for that single moment of abeyance in the tribulation of life, was content. . . .

As Lank looked on at this reunion, he observed that despite the scars of a long trail, the mare had not been starved, but judiciously fed, even groomed and otherwise cared for. An army blanket was tied about her middle with yucca fiber; some old bits of leather were sewn about her pasterns to keep them from interfering; and her hoofs showed the soothing

touch of pine tar and mutton tallow. Some one had been concerned about her.

Hallie lifted her head, and the mare wheezed an enormous lugubrious sigh, a sort of horse-laugh, as if telling her loved mistress to look at the funny side of this enormity that had been played upon her, this outrage, this joke!

Hallie burst into convulsive sobs, her cheek against the mare's cheek, her arms hugging her. Then abruptly she whirled and faced Lank. She turned into a fury. Her eyes, cold as ice, burst into hot flame.

"So, you *are* a horse-thief! And I didn't believe it! You not only rustled a thoroughbred, but she's in foal, and by what sort of a horse? Some runt cayuse in the desert where you hid her and turned her loose! Lynching's too good for you!"

Lank was mumbling helplessly: "It must have been that damned little sheep-tick Soggy—"

"Oh, yes, sure! You'll say it was your *mozo*. Well, maybe Jed Murcharee will believe a gauzy yarn like that when I call him." She led the mare out. "And besides Murcharee, there's eight or ten more who'll talk to you!" She held the branches so the mare would follow her without being scratched. "And," she called back in conclusion, "I hope you get shot!"

The mare followed, her head resting wearily on the arm that hugged it; but then, apparently for no reason, the girl hesitated and stared into the cover crop. Lank lifted his lantern.

A gnarled runt with a leather face and hairy ears was blocking the girl's path. This was Soggy, bumptious as a chaparral cock, grinning weakly, smelling of red-eye, horse-liniment and Mexican tamales.

"You aint calling Murcharee yet, please, ma'am."

"Soggy!" Lank exclaimed. "You doddering old sheep-biting crook!"

"Get out of my way," the girl said.

"Wait a minute, please, both of you. Listen." Soggy's grin showed a mouthful of horselike teeth. "Lank, here, didn't do it. I done it."

Lank stepped up and clutched him behind his wrinkled neck. "So the girl was right. Some one in the Parley outfit stole her horse!"

"Now Lank, wait! I treated the mare right. I corned her plenty like you always do a foaling mare. I gave her iron sulphate; I kept her thin, because fat would give fever at foaling-time, and—"

"And you're going to be lynched!" Hallie interrupted in a rage.

"Which is what I'd like to do to you right now!" Lank agreed.

SOGGY struggled loose and faced the girl.

"Oh, now you're talking of lynching, are you? Well, why don't you go nearer home? Maybe you remember how Lank's trotter got out of his barn last April?"

"We're talking about my horse, not yours," Hallie snapped.

"I'll tell you about yours in a minute. So listen! I found Moloch dead that morning. I had a hang-over. I dassent tell Lank; my bunk was in the leanto next to Moloch's stall, and I should of heard him led out. I thought it was my fault getting tanked up. Me and Lank go on a two-weeks' bust—we're so broken up. When the haze clears, I figure slow and certain it was your hostler Pablo who got me tanked up on purpose."

"What for?" Lank objected.

"Because it always burned him up the way Moloch beat every horse he ever trained for the Trilles."

The girl nodded slowly. "Go on. What else?"

"I went over to your outfit to see Pablo, and found he'd gone to Mexico. I knew then he'd got scairt, because Moloch broke away from him and was killed."

"You didn't tell me this," Lank said hotly.

"There wasn't any proof. And we couldn't lynch Pablo anyway, after he'd lined out. I waited five-six weeks for him to come back, and when he didn't, I was sure. What could I do? Moloch was dead. I wanted another trotter for Lank. I figured the Trilles owed us one. I took Queen High to the mountains to mate her to the first good stallion I could top off."

"Well, of all the crawling, thieving coyotes!" Lank shouted. "You steal the Trilles' best mare just because you get a fool hunch—"

"It's not a fool hunch," Hallie Trilles announced, suddenly calm. They stared at her. "I remember clearly Pablo left the very morning after Moloch died. He woke me up and asked for his pay, said he'd got a telegram from his brother, who was in jail and needed money. I remember his bunk hadn't been slept in that night. I found out he'd got no telegram. And from that day I never heard of him again. I wonder!" she said as if to herself. "Can it be possible my own hostler caused Moloch's death?"

"What happened to your mare was worse than death," Lank said. "—And when she's in foal, of all places to hide her, Soggy brings her to my ranch!"

"Where else could I hide her?" Soggy pleaded. "Everyone in the Valley knows that horse. I had to bring her down out of the snow. Think I'd raise a foal where the cold would stunt it and swell its knees and hocks? Oh, no! I was taking her to the Imperial Valley, and had to give her a couple days' rest on the way."

"Of all the slippery, seventeen-button rattlers!" Lank exploded. Hallie said nothing. But the mare gave another snort and nudged the girl's shoulder.

Soggy noticed the interruption and stared hard. Lank followed his eyes. They saw that the weary horse was looking back to the tank-house. Cold as she was, she had fretted herself into a lather, pawing and hoofing at the ground. Her flop-eared dejection could no longer hide the power that possessed her, the rampant urge within, the hidden and miraculous life beyond her own life.

"Look at the way she's acting!" Soggy burst out. "Look at how nervous she is. She's looking back to where I had her. She's looking for a place right now! Lank! I knew it was coming!"

LANK looked puzzled. "You're crazy! It was last June she was rustled. That's not even ten months."

"Well, then, she's going to slip the foal on account of the way we're all shouting and scrapping," Soggy said.

The girl was clinging to the mare's neck as the latter swung around.

"She wants the bunk-house," Lank said. "Let her in! Let her in! Soggy, you go get some blankets."

"Look here," the girl objected. "I don't want her foaling in any old hole like this!"

"It's the mare's idea, not ours," Lank said, kicking off the top of the nearest smudge-pot. "We'll dry the place out."

The mare tossed her head even though her mistress was still clinging to her. She got free and shambled wearily into the shed, as Soggy came with tattered blankets and an armful of old smudge-blackened work clothes. Lank spread these over the wet sacks and stepped out. There was more pawing, then a ponderous heaving of the mare's body. She went down heavily, slowly, like a foundering ship.

Lank lifted a big smudge-pot in his arms.

"The smoke will choke her if you light that!" the girl exclaimed helplessly.

"Stay out of this! We've got to warm some blankets." He lighted the distillate after setting the pot just outside the door where the wind sliced the thick black smoke and tossed it into the grove like a knife cutting cheese. He lighted another pot, and the two gave a touch of warmth in the biting gale. It was not enough.

"Soggy, go back to the house and get that oil-stove. And look here, you!" Lank turned to the girl. "Get away from that door and give the old mare a chance."

"I won't get away!"

"All right, don't do anything. Just let the baby freeze. He's your foal. Not mine."

"What can I do?"

"Go get some big rocks, and we'll heat 'em. We don't keep hot-water bottles on this outfit."

Hallie ran down to the sand wash of the last flood and came back with a rock under each arm. Lank heaped up windbreak bark and started a blaze. He took the rocks from the girl, put them in the fire, ordered more.

Soggy trundled out of the ranch-house, grunting and lugging the oil-stove like an ant with a rose beetle.

"While you're resting, go back and get some turpentine and soap liniment,"

"I thought you must be in trouble, Hallie; you been so long."

Lank said to him. "We'll need it for the little horse when he comes. And you'll find some rum on the kitchen shelf. No, let the girl get *that!* Get going, both of you. And make some gruel with a feed of oats and warm water. That's what she'll need for her first meal."

They both obeyed, and when the girl came back Lank said: "More clothes to wrap around these rocks—woolen shirts, my fur chaps, anything you find. He's going to be a premature foal—if he lives."

"You mean—you think he won't live?" Hallie asked fearfully.

"What do you expect of a mare with the way you've been screaming around?"

"There'll be more screaming when Jed Murcharee gets here with a rope."

"Are you calling Murcharee or getting more clothes?"

She did neither; for at that moment a sound came from the tank-house, a nicker and then a commotion as the mare swung her loose-jointed frame to one side to get momentum before struggling to her feet. Lank dashed in, and Hallie followed.

They dropped to their knees beside a wet bundle of fur and bones cuddled in a nest of blankets.

Shapeless as he was, he had a strangely human look to his bewildered eyes, like the look of the first human being breathed on by God.

"I'll be damned if the thing isn't alive!" Lank exclaimed.

"You funny little darling!" Hallie laughed, or perhaps she was crying.

"Hope he's not a mule," Lank said anxiously. "Soggy might have made a mistake. What if the sire was a mountain burro?"

"He's a beauty!" Hallie protested, which was stretching a point. "It's Queen High's first foal, and a winner!" There was a certain amount of doubt in her flattery. The fur was darker than it would be when dry, so that the color was a mystery. In fact, all points of conformation were a matter of conjecture and extreme optimism. The girl's face clouded, then puckered, her eyelids throbbed, beat back a tear or two, gave up, welled. "Poor little cayuse!" she wept.

Lank was drying the shapeless thing with a pair of ragged overalls. The mare stretched her scrawny neck and helped. And it was at that moment that they heard a footstep in the dry alfalfa outside.

It was too heavy and too deliberate to be mistaken for Soggy's. Soggy would be running from the ranch-house and back with towels and bottles or the first meal of gruel for the mother mare. But this footstep paused, creaking on bark. The walker wheezed asthmatically. Lank jumped up.

When he stepped out, he faced Jed Murcharee.

JED was a mountainous man, his stomach sustained by a belt so that the upper half rolled up in a big fold encroaching upon his chest and its star.

"Hi, Lank."

"What's the trouble, Jed?"

"That's what I'm asking you. I was up to the lemon grove with some of the boys, and I saw this here fire. Thought I'd mosey over and say hello."

"Yes—I was just starting to smudge," Lank explained. "This cold might hurt the new bloom."

"With this norther blowing?"

"If it veered to the west, we'd have enough of a freeze to spoil my crop."

"Your what?" Murcharee grinned at his little joke, his big boneless nose wiggling.

"With the spring sap flowing, a freeze will hurt the trees if not the fruit. You know how it is: the greener they are, the quicker they freeze, as we growers say."

"But what's the bonfire for?"

"Same thing. I'm kind of short on distillate. Have to burn anything I got, crank-case oil, crude oil, even brush. I was just going to change to my smudge-clothes." He showed the overalls in his hands, which were obviously suited for smudging and little else.

"H'm. Pretty funny."

The girl slipped out of the door and closed it behind her.

"What's funny, Jed?"

"I thought you must be in trouble, Hallie; you been so long. And when I saw these pots burning, it looked to me like you'd finished your palaver with Lank here and forgot all about us."

"I thought you agreed to stay out of this game till I'd talked with Lank."

THE beefy and monumental Murcharee looked hurt. "Still talking?"

"No," Hallie said quietly. "Lank had nothing to do with what happened to Queen High. The rowel wasn't his."

"Then how about his *mozo* leading your mare down through the cajon?"

"It wasn't his *mozo*. He's got an alibi which I happen to know is the truth."

Jed Murcharee rasped a thumb over his triple chin. "Well, I'm sure glad to hear that." He squinted at the smudge-pots, then at the wind in the sky. "All I can say is what I said in the first place, that Lank Parley's the best horse-breeder in the county, but not a horse-thief." As he spoke, his blue-veined nose was sniffing. He had a good nose, as everyone in the Valley knew. He could scent a fugitive by the risen dust of his horse. He was a regular bloodhound when it came to scenting horses. In the conglomerate fragrance of crushed alfalfa, guano, waxy white orange blossoms and smudge-smoke, there was nothing that should not have been there, except the unmistakable smell of a barn. But there was no barn anywhere around this part of the grove. Jed Murcharee decided that he must be mistaken.

"And if that's all you want, Jed," Lank said, kicking the lid off another smudge-pot, "why, I'll get on with my work."

Murcharee waddled off, casting a final glance at the girl, his eyes screwed to two tiny troubled slits. Then suddenly a grin twisted one side of his mouth. From the look of Hallie's moist hot eyes, Jed Murcharee arrived at a conclusion. It did not explain the smudging when the norther was keeping the temperature safe. But it made one point very clear: Hallie Trilles needed no help from him; nor did she want him on this ranch. He left.

Lank looked down into the girl's face in amazement—that same amazement which she always stirred in him.

"So you wanted heat for the new bloom," she said, smiling. "That'd be a good name for the little critter. I'll call him New Bloom."

"But why'd you send Jed away?"

"I saw danger on your face. I knew if I turned Soggy over to him, you'd start smoking things up."

"I guess you're right. I wouldn't let any harm come to that little terrapin, even if he does belong in jail. He did what he did so's to help me. He couldn't stand the way I was brooding over Moloch and letting the ranch go to pot. The old seedwart was pretty fond of us—

"Where else could I hide her?"

of my dad, and then of me. Course he ought to be hanged."

"I want to talk to him."

Lank gave a few whistles, the sort a man will use in calling his dog. Soggy's head and ears appeared cautiously over the high cover crop.

"Come here, you penny-ante lizard!"

Soggy came.

The girl looked down at his pouchy face.

"I want to ask you something, Soggy: Considering the way you look at things, do you have any remote hunch that you were doing something crooked when you stole Queen High?"

"No ma'am, no remote hunch whatsoever."

The girl put up her hand to stop Lank's imminent interruption.

"You still think that the Trilles outfit owes your outfit a horse?"

"Course I do. I got more proof about your hostler, Pablo—"

"Never mind. We'll admit that Pablo stole Moloch and that the horse got away from him and wandered back home and was killed. But I want to be sure of something else: If you had the horse we owe you, do you think Lank could get on his feet again?"

SOGGY cracked his knuckles in the labor of thought. "Well, I know this much: If folks heard Lank and me were raising another race-horse, why, there wouldn't be much trouble borrowing money. Everybody knows when it comes to horse-training we're pretty hunk. And in a year or two the grove will be paying, provided we fertilize heavy and Lank works day and night pruning and spraying and cultivating."

"I'm asking you one thing else," the girl said. "What sort of a horse sired that little fellow in there?"

"You mean you're going to *give* him to us!"

"Who sired him?"

Soggy's leathery face shone as if it had been scrubbed with saddle soap. His eyes darted from the girl to Lank. He panted, grinned, then suddenly looked tragic.

"Well, you'll sure crawl my hump if I tell you, ma'am. But it wasn't my fault. She got out of the brush corral I made for her, and the next I knew she was running with a wild remuda. The stallion leading the bunch was a scarred-up, piebald crowbait—a hellion of a fighter. But why of all the broncs in the sierras Queen High should pick him out, I don't know! It was a joke on me. And on her too. He was awful. A lop-eared, Roman-nosed, flat-footed critter that I wouldn't hardly call a horse."

LANK swore. The girl seemed to be on the point of bursting into tears or wringing Soggy's dark brown neck, but she did neither. She clenched her fists, pressing her nails into her palms in an attempt to calm herself. Then she turned to Lank and said steadily:

"The foal won't do our stables any good. Raising a half-breed fuzztail can't help Queen High's name as a brood mare. But it might help you. The foal's yours."

"I don't want him."

"It's pretty poor payment, I admit, giving you a low-bred cayuse to square up losing a horse like Moloch. But you could bull your luck with him. You could bluff about his blood."

"Just what I say!" Soggy cried eagerly. "A colt gets his best points from the dam, anyway, and we won't tell who the sire is. No one'll see he aint a thoroughbred, for a long time. Besides, as the old-timers say, a trotter aint a separate race or breed. Folks will just hear that Lank Parley's training a new horse which is going to win every purse ever hung up at San Berdoo!"

"I won't accept him," Lank repeated.

"Of course you'll have to leave the mare here till he's weaned," Soggy hurried on. "We'll start him on bruised oats next month. But you better leave her till his teeth are strong enough to crop clover."

"I reckoned on that when I made the offer. But I'll be over every day to see that you're treating her right," Hallie stipulated.

Lank looked at her quickly. What was this that was being said? Hallie Trilles coming over to his grove every day! "By grab, that's something!"

Soggy hopped and danced over the clods, rubbing his horny hands, chuckling, "He's ourn, he's ourn! May be only a fuzztail, but he's half good anyway! Lank and me'll do the rest. We'll make a trotter out of him!" He ducked into the tank-house and came out breathless and triumphant. He was carrying a square of paper in his hand—a "check-up" card for the irrigation furrows. He saw Lank and the girl standing close together, staring at each other silently. Soggy cleared his throat.

"Please, ma'am, could I ask you just one little favor. If you'd give us a bill-of-sale so if Murcharee finds me with this foal he won't be askin' questions about vents and wartles and brands. I'd like to have something to show him so he won't get irritated."

Lank muttered: "Get the hell-and-gone out of here, Soggy!"

But the girl laughed, took the pencil tied to the check-up card and wrote:

"For a good consideration I hereby give Queen High's first foal to Lank Parley."

Soggy clutched it eagerly; for Lank, ignoring this nonsense, had stepped into the tank-house.

For the first time Lank Parley was making a careful appraisal of the gift-horse, if not in the mouth, at least in all points of conformation. The little fellow was dry enough now, what with the ministrations of the mare, so that his color was distinguishable and he was already untangling his wobbly legs trying to reach for milk.

"Pretty hefty little critter for a premature foal," Lank said proudly. "Born much too soon, but he's standing up already! Too bad you haven't got a father, little feller." Lank looked up to the girl behind him. "If he'd only had Moloch's deep thighs and sloping hips!"

"Combined with the dam's lean hocks and knee action!" Hallie said woefully.

"And Moloch's cannon bone, the strength of it, which your mare hasn't got!"

"He'll have her high withers," Hallie pointed out in defense of her pet.

"Sure, it's the two of them that would make him perfect. Moloch's length from hip joint to hock which a champion trotter needs—"

"And my mare's high head," Hallie insisted as the last word.

Lank held the little cayuse on his ridiculous legs so that he could suckle. The girl rubbed the incredibly soft ears.

"Pablo was always telling me," Hallie said tragically, "that Moloch and my mare would have given us a world-beater."

"He's not going to be a piebald, anyway, thank God."

"A piebald!" Soggy said contemptuously. They had forgotten he was standing behind them. "A piebald! What an idea—wow!"

"You said the bronc' was a piebald."

"What bronc'?"

"Consarn you for a lop-eared prune, you said the wild bronc', the leader of the remuda, was a piebald."

"OH, *him?*" Soggy chuckled way down in the leathery folds of his neck. He creased the "bill-of-sale" accurately, tucked it in the pocket of his vest and sewed a piece of wire through the flap. "I was only fooling. If I told the real secret as regards this here colt, we'd never have got him for love or money. Thirty grand wouldn't buy him, forty grand, fifty—"

"What secret, for Pete's sake?"

"Why, that he belonged to us all along. Course no jury of ranchers would give a verdict against Hallie Trilles, being in all known cases the foal belongs to the owner of the mare. But not this foal! I told you I wasn't rustling the mare, and I meant it. I was just appropriatin' the foal she was carrying—a foal which was stole from us before he was born!"

"You mean she was in foal the night you stole her!" Lank exclaimed, the truth dawning.

"Sure. I neglected to state that that's why Pablo took Moloch out of the barn."

"You mean this is the son of Moloch!" Lank gasped.

"Lank!" Hallie cried, throwing her arms about him. "We've got a world-beater!" She blushed, and then added: "I mean *you've* got him!"

"I like it better, what you said the first time," Lank answered.

The possessive plural is a small word, but in this case it extended beyond a complete language.

Another vivid story by Kenneth Perkins will appear in an early issue.

The TREASURE

The captivating story of a tremendous journey in search of the lost riches of Angkor . . . By the author of "Caravan Treasure."

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

The Story Thus Far:

THE whole amazing affair began one fine spring day in Paris when we—my wild Irish uncles and I—met the Russian count and heard his extraordinary story. For the Russian was looking for two daring and able men to risk with him a great adventure; and in those two untamed hawks of trouble my uncles Thurland and Flane Spillane he knew he had found the right men.

At the Paris Exposition, it seems, had been displayed a reproduction of a part of the astounding ruins of Angkor, in the remote French colony of Cambodia. And a part of the exhibit was a native of the region, a priest or bonze who claimed to be of incredible age. And the bonze had told the Russian that the inhabitants of Angkor had fled the plague many centuries ago, leaving their great city deserted as the French had recently found it.

The Count believed the bonze possessed the secret of prolonging life indefinitely—the secret also of the hiding place of the rich treasures taken from ancient Angkor.

And so it came about that we all, including the Count's lovely American niece Joyeuse, took ship for far Cambodia—and began what was to prove an adventure terrific indeed. *(The story continues in detail:)*

THE *Van Tromp* was no great sea boat. She was small, and the Mediterranean seemed to know it, picking on her whenever a wind came up. For the seas bully the little ships, the waves having a great longing to rock them backward and forward, trying with all their might to tip them right over. And off Malta a big howling wind came rushing out of Africa, and fell like a mastiff on the *Van Tromp*.

The monk went to his bunk and stayed there. So did the Count. And, on the second day of the storm Joyeuse thought she could stand it better if she retired. Captain Oudegeest, and the passenger, whose name appeared to be Schiemann, and who was, so he told Thurland, a Latvian by birth, ate with us at the big

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# of Vanished Men

Illustrated by John Richard Flanagan

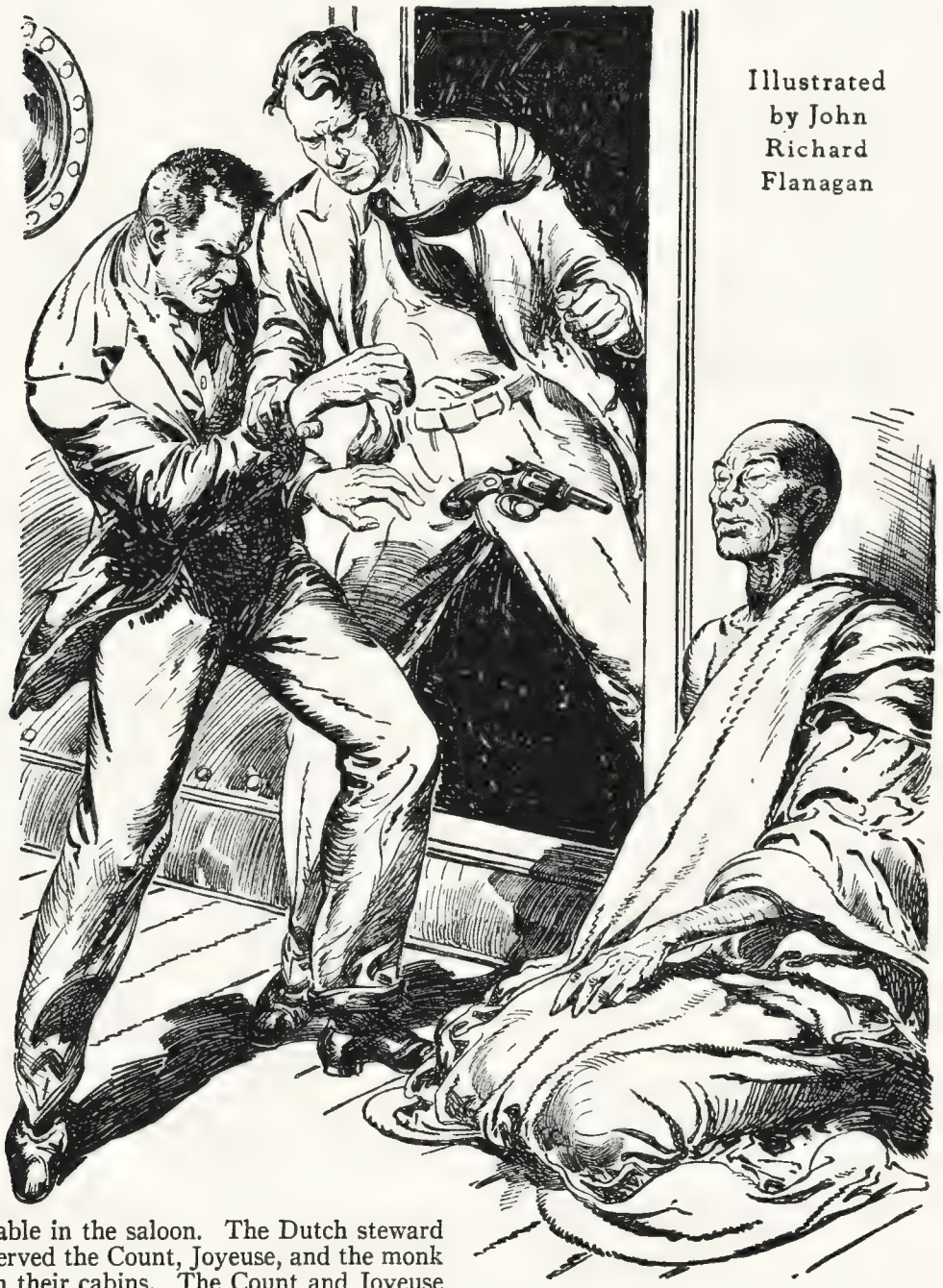


table in the saloon. The Dutch steward served the Count, Joyeuse, and the monk in their cabins. The Count and Joyeuse ate little, but the monk ate nothing at all. He lay with shut eyes, mumbling what seemed curses at the tumbling waters.

On the third night of the storm Flane went to the monk's cabin before retiring, to see that the old fellow was all right. The deck was unlighted, the cabin dark. Flane pushed open the door, and was in the act of stepping within, when some one leaving the cabin crashed against him, knocking him flat on his back.

Flane, reaching up, made a grab at the leg of the unknown as the fellow was leaping over him, and the unknown came with a crash to the boards. The noise brought Thurland, the Count and myself. Some one pushed the button of a flashlight. Flane had a clutch on the ankle of Schiemann, the yellow-faced Latvian!

Captain Oudegeest lifted Schiemann to his feet. At first we thought he had been dazed by the fall; then we discovered that he was under the influence of a drug. The Captain led him into the saloon, seated him in a chair, and sent for a shadowy officer called "the doctor," but who seldom left his cabin.

The "doctor" made a quick examination of the yellow-faced man. He made a queer gesture by running his forefinger beneath his nose; then he winked at the Captain. In silence the Captain and the "doctor" took hold of the fellow and escorted him to his cabin.

Thurland looked at Flane. "Was he walking out of the monk's cabin when you struck him?" he asked.

"*Walking?*" snapped Flane. "He was flying! Knocked me flat with his speed!"

"What the devil was he doing there?" growled Thurland.

"Let's go and see," said the Count.

In a body we went to the cabin of the ancient. He was sound asleep.

WE returned to the saloon. Captain Oudegeest was there drinking coffee. The Count told him that he considered the presence of Schiemann in the cabin of the monk rather extraordinary, and he suggested that the Captain question the man in the morning.

"I vill do no such t'ing!" said the Captain. "Dot oldt man is no goodt. If Schiemann went in dere to kill heem, I vould be bleased! He is badt. He bring troubles on my boat." Noisily he sucked down the remainder of his bowl of coffee and stalked out.

"What does he mean by troubles on his boat?" asked the count.

Thurland shook his head. "I don't think the Dutchman likes Methuselah," he said. "He seemed a little angry about the old fellow's story of his great grandfather and the little brown lady. He might think that there's a brown leaf in his genealogical tree. Let's go to bed. We'll talk matters over when we see the Latvian in the morning."

We didn't see the Latvian in the morning. He kept to his cabin. We rolled by Crete, the *Van Tromp* groaning like an old lady with rheumatism.

The monk was up, but he knew nothing about his visitor of the previous evening. He shook his head vigorously when the Count questioned him. He hadn't spoken to Schiemann, and he had nothing in his cabin that the other would desire. Captain Oudegeest was sulky. He barely acknowledged our salutes.

IT was immediately after lunch that trouble started. A Finnish sailor was the owner of a monkey of the wah-wah species; and today the Finn brought him out on the sunshiny well-deck.

The old monk was squatting outside his cabin, a blanket wrapped around him, his eyes half closed. The rolling of the *Van Tromp* was hard on him.

The wah-wah barked, just one short single note; and to his great surprise there came an answering bark. And from the way he swung around on his hindlegs and stared about the steamer, it seemed that the bark pleased him. He was a male wah-wah, and he thought the invisible barker was a female. That's what his actions told us.

He barked again, his head on one side listening, and immediately the answering bark came to him.

The wah-wah let out a whole stream of barks and started out to look for the lady. The Finn screamed at him, but he took no notice.

A mad ape was that fellow. His speed was amazing. He dashed here and there and everywhere. He went through the sailors' quarters; then, not finding the unseen barker, he sprang for the upper deck, barking as he searched for the invisible sweetheart.

He rushed from one cabin to another, clawing at the bunks, pulling blankets and coverlets to the floor, upsetting everything that wasn't nailed down.

It was unlucky that the yellow-faced Schiemann should be asleep when the wah-wah came searching. The half-crazed ape tore the blankets from the berth, and the barks of the wah-wah were mixed with the curses and the yells of rage of the passenger.

A revolver cracked; the monkey appeared with Schiemann in pajamas at his heels. A second bullet missed the ape, who swung from the iron rail to the deck below, and disappeared in the quarters of the sailors, fear for the moment smothering the desire to find the unseen barker.

The first officer of the *Van Tromp* seized the arm of the Latvian and tried to explain the conduct of the wah-wah—how the monkey had been upset by the barking of another monkey hidden somewhere on the steamer.

Schiemann's gaze fell on the ancient, wrapped in the blanket folds. Screaming threats, he broke away from the officer and made a rush toward the ancient.

It was Thurland who halted him. My uncle stepped in his path when Schiemann was within ten feet of the monk, wrenched the revolver from his hand, tossed it overboard, then swung the fellow round and gave him a push in the direction of his cabin.

Thurland's action seemed to bring him to his senses. He mumbled an apology for his conduct, then at a trot hurried back to his cabin. The old monk dozed.

The Count looked at Thurland and Flane. The three were puzzled. "Was it Methuselah who barked?" asked Flane.

"Of course," said Thurland. "I saw his lips move when the monkey climbed up the ladder from the deck below."

"But Yellow-face hadn't seen him do it, and yet he knew," said Flane.

Thurland was silent for a long minute; then he spoke. "That fellow is no more a Latvian than I am," he growled. "He's a cross-breed from Macao, where they've got so many different kinds of blood in their bodies that their hands and their feet fight with each other, and the hair on their heads grows seven different ways out of spite. And it isn't the first time that he's seen Methuselah either."

The Count nodded. He seemed upset.

As the *Van Tromp* rolled into more peaceful waters, Joyeuse reappeared on deck. She was excited because we were approaching Port Saïd, for Port Saïd is the gate to the Orient and all the wonders of the East. Somewhere in the blue haze in front of us was the great Canal that De Lesseps dug through the leagues of sand, and our nearness to it played the mischief with my nerves.

For the East came out to meet us. With every thump of the screw, the feel of it became more apparent. There was a soft velvety wind that came up from the desert below Cairo, the great Sudan; part of the sea through which we moved came from the Nile itself, the great river shoving into the Mediterranean the millions of tons of water it brings from the hills of Abyssinia.

And the stars, bigger and brighter than I had ever seen them, seemed to know

that we were on our way to find the lost city of Klang-Nan of which the monk spoke, and where he had lived hundreds of years before. The fine stars that had looked down on many wanderers. . . .

Before daylight I awoke to find that the steamer had stopped. I looked out the port, and saw the town of Port Saïd. And there on the end of the breakwater leading to the Canal entrance was the statue of a man with his arm extended—the great De Lesseps pointing toward the East—the glorious East!

CHAPTER IX

A Kidnaping at Port Saïd

"THIS town," said my Uncle Thurland, "is the sink of the world. Every man going to the East gets his first mouthful of the devil's juice in Port Saïd, and every man going westward takes his last swig before he reaches countries that the Lord still rules over. The hungry Westerner on his first voyage gets popeyed over it, and the old rakes from the East leave it with regret. There's a pub in Queenstown called 'The First and Last,' and I always think of it when I see Port Saïd."

Thurland and I were going ashore to buy clothes and shoes and topees, for we had left Marseilles with little, not having

time or inclination to buy with the police at our heels. Flane had taken Joyeuse for a look at the town, and the Count was left aboard with the monk. The *Van Tromp* had to fill her old stomach with coal before she went into the Canal; and when we came down the gangplank, the colliers were around her, also the bumboat men with all sorts of trash that they wished to sell to the crew.

About the wickedness of the town I can say little, but the strangeness of it slammed me hard when we stepped ashore at the landing-stage. For although it is hot and filthy and smelly, it has, to a boy, the same strong attraction as the door to his first circus. For Port Saïd is a great door to which come the hurrying ships, eager to get through to the wonders beyond. There they were in the harbor, rocking backward and forward with impatience as they waited their turn to get into the Canal. A big P. & O. steamer for Australia, a Messagéries boat for China and Japan, an American liner on a trip around the world—filled with folk whose pockets were lined with dollars that they threw away at every port for things of no value, for as Thurland said, ports make people so crazy that they buy things they would never think of purchasing at home. And there were big tramp ships and tankers rocking at their buoys, their captains waiting their turn. And the fierce expectancy and nervousness and bustle and heat put a glamour on the town. A fine glamour that got into the blood, and put magic into the cries of the men who pushed rugs and beads and feathers into your face on the Shâri es-Sultân Husein, making the street like a fair-ground with their whining cries. And you weren't surprised to see the English and the Americans buying things in a hurry, the yells of the sellers making them believe that if they didn't buy quickly, they would lose treasures that they could never see again.

Thurland glared at the pack of peddlers, and they fell away from us, knowing that my uncle was a person who had seen ports before. Shrewd are these little lice who live on the foolishness of travelers, cunning in their way of summing up voyagers. Now and then a man would rush at Thurland; then suddenly turn away as the fierce eyes of my uncle fell on him, turn away like a yapping terrier before the look of a bulldog. . . .

We bought white suits and topees and shoes and underclothing from sleek servile Egyptians, cunning Greeks, and more cunning Syrians; and with half-naked boys carrying our purchases, we made our way back to the landing-stage. We thought we had finished with Port Saïd with its humbug and trickery, not knowing what was awaiting our ears on the *Van Tromp*. Not knowing at all.

THE Count screamed the news to us as our boat swung to the gangplank. We caught his words above the noise of the winches and the rumble of coal. *The monk! The monk had escaped!*

Flushed and excited, the Count stumbled down the ladder and shouted details. The old one was not on the steamer. It had been searched from stem to stern. The bumboat men had been questioned. No one had seen the ancient. For just a minute the Count had napped outside the cabin of Methuselah, and when on awaking he had looked into the cubicle, the berth was empty!

My uncle said nothing, although he was mad with temper. He ordered a steward to take the bundles; then he told our boatman to pull him around the steamer so that he could question the squatting bumboat men. And fierce was

that same questioning. Their faces grew sallow with fear as he put his queries. Had they seen an old man come over the side? It would be better for them to speak the truth, for if they lied, they would never sell another brass trinket to sailormen. Softly he made his threat, so softly that the words carried the fear that comes with the hiss of a snake.

AN old man had seen—a wrinkled patriarch, who might have known De Lesseps. He had seen something that might have been a bundle or it might have been a man, lowered over the side. He had turned his head, thinking it might be contraband, but now he was sure it wasn't that, for it had moved; and opium, by the beard of the Prophet, didn't kick in its cloth, although it could bring dreams.

Thurland waved his hand to the landing-stage, and we went swiftly back to the Shâri es-Sultân Husein. And now the town was an enemy of ours, a place where tricksters who plotted against us had their hiding-places. . . .

On that first trip to the town my uncle had exchanged greetings with a big man who stood near the landing-stage. They had known each other in Shanghai, so Thurland told me, and now when we returned to search for the monk, the man was still there, smoking a cigar and looking leisurely at the milling crowds.

Thurland stepped across to him and spoke. "Are you busy, John?" he asked.

"I'm not," answered the man. "I have all the time in the world and a bit left over."

I knew from his frank cordial manner that the man was an American, and I knew by the way he listened to Thurland that the two were brothers under their skins, for his eyes brightened as Thurland told him of the disappearance of the ancient.

"They've got him in some hole in this town of the devil," snapped Thurland, "and I'm going to find him if I comb it from here to the first sand dune. Will you come along?"

"Let her go!" cried the man called John; and he was so eager, that he hopped on the bare toes of a Lascar and made the fellow bawl with pain.

Now, the white visitors to Port Saïd stay around the sea-front on the verandas of the Eastern Exchange Hotel and the Casino Palace, and their farthest trip inland is to the shipping offices or the banks. And good reason they have for keeping close to the landing-stage. At the back of the town, where the waters of Lake Manzala slop against the sun-baked shanties, is the dirty native quarter that you reach by the Shâri el-Gâmi et-Taufiqi, and it was to this section that my uncle and the American and myself galloped in a horse carriage with a mad driver who screamed for the roadway.

"It would be better for you to go back to the ship," said Thurland to me as we climbed into the carriage.

"Please let me come," I said; and when the American named John laughed, Thurland pushed me into the carriage.

An inquisitive white in that native quarter out by the shallow lake has a fine chance of getting a knife between his ribs, there being a number of colored residents who hate curiosity. But my uncle didn't care about their feelings. He was thinking only of the loss he would suffer if the monk was taken away from him. As the galloping horse took us into the filthy quarter where the odors of dried fish, of rancid oil, of saffron, and things unnamable came against us like an army, Thurland was thinking of the dark Mekong. His strong hands were clenched as if they held the rose-colored pearls that Marco Polo spoke of, the great emeralds that kept a girl pure, and the blazing rubies that were thought to be the eyes of dead snakes. For my uncle had the power of picturing the things that he sought, throwing them up before his eyes so that they became terribly and maddeningly real. When he read a story, he saw everything as if it had happened, a gift which some people have, and which is called visualizing.

"STAY here!" said Thurland to the coachman, as we reached the Shâri Kisra. "Don't move from this spot. If I don't come back for hours, you'll be well paid."

The search was on—the search for the old monk. The search through that quarter that might have been a suburb of hell itself, so full of sin and viciousness it seemed on that morning. For the servants of Satan ran the little dens into which we went one after the other. The little dens in which strange sins were born and bred in the gloom.

Thurland and the American, marching like two big grenadiers, dived into the dens without any fear. Places where queer drinks were sold to dazed men and drabs; places from which came the reek of opium so that you knew what was go-

Crying, "Tohsâroth! Tohsâroth!" into the narrow streets went the human flood,

ing on there when you were yards away from the door; places where lost women, that were hardly women at all, cursed and shrieked when my uncle pulled aside the blinds of split bamboo and looked within.

A man threw a bottle at the head of the American. The American dodged; then with a swift punch he knocked the fellow down. I thought that John was enjoying it. There was a broad grin on his face as the hunt went on. But there was no grin on the face of Thurland. The two eyes of him—those eyes that always looked like two spearmen on a castle wall—were blazing with temper as he asked questions, stamping into the dark rooms behind the opium shops, and bringing squeals from the unclean things that sat in the half darkness.

We came to a lane that had only one entrance—a lane full of sand and deviltry, so that it had the look of an unsprung trap. When you looked at it, if you had only the brains of poor Willy Hennessy, who had no brains at all, you would say to yourself: "There's something wrong here. The toe of my shoe is going to touch a rope or a spring that the devil has stretched in the sand, and I'll lose my immortal soul." That was the feeling that came out from it, a feeling that made you think there was an invisible angel at the open end of it, sending out warnings.

But Thurland walked boldly into it, John at his heels. And with terror choking me, I ran behind them, my ears alive to the whispers that came from the shuttered windows—the whispers that rose like a swarm of bees when we swung into the lane. And from a latticed balcony, a light-o'-love screamed a warning that brought a slamming of doors.

Thurland pushed against the first door. It gave way before him, and three men

pushing through Sikhs, Hindoos, Malays. And now it came close to a riot.

ran into a room beyond. He caught the last of the three by the back of the neck and pulled him into the sunshine; then as he started to question the filthy wretch, he choked back his words and flung back his head to listen. From above us came the soft strain of music: a thin wavering eerie note that rose and fell. A note that took both Thurland and myself back to the Villa Mille Fleurs in Neuilly on the evening when the bonze tried to escape!

Thurland flung the man from him and dashed into the house. The American followed. A fear paralyzed my limbs, a terrible fear that held me there in the fierce sunshine.

Squeals and curses came from within. The splintery noises made by the crashing of flimsy chairs and tables, the thud of fists; then as I stared at the dark door, Thurland staggered out with the old monk in his arms! Behind him, guarding the retreat, was the American, waving the iron leg of a bedstead that put fear into the skinny devils who ran like starved wolves after him.

"Back to the carriage!" cried Thurland; and at a trot we fled from the lane, through a narrow alley filled with refuse, then into the Shâri Kisra. Far off, we saw the waiting coachman, and with a shouting mob at our heels, we ran toward him.

The coachman, when he saw the mob, thought the business was one that he would do well to dodge. He sprang to his driving seat when we were close to him, and started to flog his horse; but the American was too quick for him. He rushed to the head of the sleepy animal and threw it back on its haunches. Thurland tossed the monk into the carriage, tumbled in after him, dragging me with him. John hopped up beside the frightened driver, grabbed the whip and used

it in turn on the horse and the crowd that had caught up with us. The carriage lurched forward; we swung at a gallop into the Shâri el-Gâmi; beyond was the Shâri de Lesseps and the landing-stage.

As Thurland carried the old bonze to a boat, he spoke to the big American. "Would you like a trip?" he asked.

"Where to?" countered the other.

"Saigon and beyond," said Thurland.

"Sure," said the man called John.

"Step aboard," said Thurland; and that is how John the American, whose full name was John Jefferson Martin, was enlisted in the great search. . . .

We received a visit from the police during the afternoon. They had heard stories which they wished to verify. The Count and Thurland spoke to them. Persons whose names we did not know had kidnaped the old monk; my uncle had rescued him; the affair, as far as we were concerned, was finished.

But the police wished to see the bonze. They visited his cabin and questioned him, the Count acting as interpreter. The ancient nodded his head vigorously to show that he wished to stay with the Count, and the police had to be content.

"How old is he?" asked the sergeant.

"I don't know exactly," said the Count.

"There's a mummy in the Egyptian Museum at Cairo that is a dead ringer for him," said the sergeant. "They dug it, and a praying baboon in red granite, out of the place where they found old Tut-Ankh-Amen." He stared for a long while at the monk; then he walked out on deck and spat fiercely into the sunshine. "He makes me feel as cold as a lizard," he growled.

FLANE and Joyeuse returned to the steamer. They had lunched at the Casino Palace Hotel, and were surprised to hear of all the happenings that had taken place during their absence. They were introduced to John Jefferson Martin and informed of his enlistment. They seemed pleased. Martin had a friendly manner. Captain Oudegeest protested that there was no cabin for him. But the Dutch agent wished to gather in every piaster he could, and he made the Captain shift his third officer and give the cabin to Martin.

"And our dear friend Schiemann?" asked Flane. "Did he have any hand in the affair of the morning?"

"He went ashore early and has not returned," said Thurland.

"I hope he gets lost," said Flane. "It will save one or the other of us from twisting his neck."

CHAPTER XII

The Door of the Orient

WE edged into the Canal late that afternoon, and Europe was lost to us. For the Canal is the door to the Orient, and when a vessel creeps slowly into the hundred-mile gut, those who are upon her enter another world: The world of the Thousand and One Nights, the world of magic, of witchery, of dreams. And one's thoughts change; the common-sense logical part of the mind giving way to the flighty imaginative part, so that facts are distasteful, and the lamp of Aladdin is in one's hand. And the slowness with which the steamer moves makes a spell, its speed being held down to ten kilometers an hour, lest the waves trouble the embankments; and that too adds to the thrill, making the passage a sort of strange ceremony of initiation.

Now it was curious the effect of the Canal upon the bonze. He was on deck when we entered the waterway, and almost immediately we noticed the change. He had been depressed and silent since the moment Thurland had brought him back to the steamer; but now he roused himself as we moved slowly down the great trench. He straightened his back; his eyes, that were bits of polished jet, glowed with a strange light; and he began to talk in the manner in which he had told the story of the plague at Angkor—talk with a fierceness and swiftness that puzzled the Count.

Although no one but the Count understood what he was saying, we strained our ears to listen to him, the very passion that was in his words holding us—that and the look of amazement on the face of the Count. No time had he to translate what the old fellow was saying, for the words rolled from the thin lips in a manner that made us think he was reciting something that he had learned years and years before.

It was a sudden move by Flane that interrupted the flow of words. We were standing in a clump above the well-dock; and Flane, taking his eyes from the face of the monk, saw something that interested him. A sailor had climbed noiselessly from below, and was clinging by his finger-tips to the iron railing so that he could hear what the bonze was saying!

A fine lesson Flane taught the fellow. He lifted his shoe and brought it down on the man's fingers, and the yell of pain and rage that came from him halted the monk. The sailor dropped down on the covered hatch and ran for the galley, but we had recognized him. He was the sailor with the large lobes to his ears.

Flane sprang over the railing and gave chase, but the fellow hid himself, and my uncle had an angry argument with Captain Oudegeest over the incident. The Captain would not believe that the man was eavesdropping. He asked why should anyone listen to what the ancient was saying.

"He ees a mad oldt liar!" he cried. "Dot stuff he speak about my great grandfather ees all lies! You must not intervere mit my sailors! You beoples an' dot oldt man make troubles on my ship."

"We'll make more if some folk don't watch themselves," snapped Flane.

Flane came back to where we were standing and put a question. "Did anyone see Schiemann?" he asked. "Has he come aboard?"

No one had seen the supposed Latvian. His cabin door was closed; and the Dutch steward shook his head when Thurland made careless inquiry. Schiemann had been left behind at Port Saïd.

The flurry caused by the sailor's attempt to listen to the bonze took our attention for the moment from the old man; but now our curiosity to learn what he had been saying made us turn to the Count. The old man was silent, but that change in his manner noticeable when we entered the waterway was more evident than ever. There had come to him a strange majesty, a look of power, of importance. There came out from him something that crushed the doubt one held regarding his great age, the doubt that one made into a barricade for sanity.

NOW, as the *Van Tromp* slipped slowly between the sandbanks, the suspicion that he was lying about his age fled from us, and we believed. It was upon the face of every one of us, quite visible in the dusk. We believed implicitly. The dusk creeping over the Arabian sands helped to establish that belief; a thin green-white moon over Egypt assisted; the black outline of a camel and its rider on the bank lent aid; and the warm odors of the night bedded down the acceptance in our minds.

A half-mile spear of light came out of the gloom ahead. The eye of the hurrying *Malle des Indes*—the Indian Mail. The eye of England! The *Van Tromp* shouldered in to the hitching-posts to allow the Royal Mail free passage. What was a small Dutch steamer, to the monster that carried princes and maharajahs, diplomats and cattle-kings? The line of faces looked contemptuously upon us as she thrust by; yet we at the moment would not have changed places with any group upon the mailboat. For a kind of ecstasy had come to us with the belief in the monk's great age, a sort of beatitude that thrilled us.

THE voice of the Count showed how the ancient's words had affected him. He spoke in a hushed voice as if great secrets had been given to him, secrets that he was a little afraid to put into words.

"He says," whispered the Count, "that he was through here years and years before the Canal was constructed. He passed over the old caravan road between Es-Sâlihîyeh and El-Kantara. That was the old route from Syria to Egypt."

After a long silence Thurland put a question. "And what was taking him to Egypt?" he asked, his voice hoarse and low.

For a moment or two the Count did not answer. Possibly he thought the answer would appear strange to us, and well it might. "He was with a party that was carrying gifts to the Sultan Ali Bey who had conquered Syria, but was assassinated when he was returning to Egypt. His party heard of the killing and returned."

"And when was the Sultan Ali Bey killed?" asked Thurland.

"Around 1770," answered the Count quietly.

Then, as we were figuring in silence, the music came to our ears—that thin flutelike music that we had heard in the Villa Mille Fleurs at Neuilly, and which Thurland, Martin and myself had heard in the native quarter of Port Saïd!

It came from the dark bank of the Canal, a thin sweet lariat of sound, circling over us so that at times we thought we could see it. See it in the velvety darkness, a scarlet thread, weaving in circles, rising and falling at the will of the player!

It twisted itself around the monk. He clutched the rail of the steamer and

stared shoreward, his lean neck thrust out, his wrinkled face alive with interest. He made little moaning noises, queer animal-like noises that might be made by a chained dog striving to get to something just beyond its reach. There was about him a longing that made us think he might leap from the steamer in an effort to reach the sandy shore. Thurland stepped close to the old man, one hand ready to grasp his clothes if he made a move to jump overboard.

The music ran with us. The bank was in darkness, and we could not see who or what produced the sounds, but as we were moving at the slow speed of four miles an hour it was quite easy for the musician to keep up with us. . . . In the afternoon small Arab children begging pennies had run with us for a mile or so.

For miles the music ran with us, coming plain to us till we reached the Balah Lakes. And how it clung to the steamer we never knew. But at the lakes the channel widened, and we heard it far off, then lost it completely.

The monk had no intention of going to bed, and not one of us seemed sleepy. We sat there on the deck and watched the banks slip slowly by, the wash of the steamer running on either side of us, making two white serpents of foam against the sand. And there was something in the night that had the quality of hypnotism. For of strange places there are plenty along that waterway; and now and then the Count spoke of them in a low voice: the spot where Miriam, the sister of Moses, was smitten with leprosy; and the Bitter Lakes, which are the *Marah* of the Bible. . . .

In the morning we came to Suez; and at Suez we got a surprise. For a small launch brought out Schiemann, whom we had left behind at Port Saïd, he having reached Ismaïlia by a fast motorboat, and from there having taken the train which covers in two and a half hours the distance that takes a steamer eight hours or more. And with Schiemann came a friend—a big black-browed man who looked a killer, if ever a man did. And by the way he glared at my two uncles as he passed to Schiemann's cabin, it would look to a fair-minded observer that he had picked them out as likely victims.

"I'm afraid," said Thurland, after he had passed, "that the black chap has heard nothing to your credit."

Flane grinned. "It was you he looked hard at," he said. "Well, there's nothing like a sea voyage for making friendships, so I've heard."

"You've heard wrong," said Thurland.

CHAPTER XIII

A Battle at Aden

THE *Van Tromp* waddled down the Red Sea; and on the steamer was the false quiet that comes before a thunderstorm, when clouds are busy packing themselves together, so that they can make as big a muss as possible. Not one of our party spoke to Schiemann or to the black-browed man, whose name we learned was Bruden; and they gave no indication that they wished to speak to us. The two ate at a separate table, and spent the day whispering to each other. . . . It was a strange ship's company. Captain Oudegeest was surly. He glared at the bonze whenever he passed him on deck, but the monk took no notice.

The Count told Joyeuse and me about a curious health system that the bonze practiced, and which the Count and the monk discussed every day. The name of it was *Hatha Yoga,* and it told of the proper way to breathe, the right exercises to take, and the proper food one should eat if one wished to reach a hundred years or more.

"It's too much work," said Joyeuse, laughing. "And what's the good of living, if you look like the monk?"

"You needn't look like him," said the Count.

"Well, I'd sooner look pretty for a little while and then die," said Joyeuse. "I'd hate to be old and ugly."

"But think of the wisdom that would be yours," argued the Count.

"I don't like wisdom," said Joyeuse; then in a lower voice she whispered: "I like—I like love."

She glanced along the deck, to where Flane was leaning over the rail. . . .

The Count knew a lot about the world, and he had gathered much thrilling information about places. And when he told of what he had seen, he did it with little words that had the color of crushed opals.

In our passing through the Red Sea, he spoke much to me of the Past, the fat Past that was filled with big happenings in that same quarter. For the Red Sea and the lands about it were the center of the world in the days of old, and the feel of those things come to folk who travel there. You think of Solomon with his black beard, so curly and shiny, sitting on his high throne made of ivory and yellow gold, asking if the Queen of Sheba has arrived to eat some sherbet with him, and ordering up a chariot to take her for a gallop over the hot sands, his big hairy arm around her so that she can't fall out. "For Solomon," as my Uncle Thurland said, "was always a man in a hurry as far as ladies were concerned." And the two of them asking questions of each other, questions that were so puzzling that no one else could answer them. . . . Oh, what a fine brave world it was in those days!

And I knew why the Count was interested in the monk and the manner in which the monk had reached such a great age. For the Count thought the present was nothing at all, and that like wine, everything else had to be old to be good. We were going to Angkor, so that he might find the secret of life; then, after hundreds of years, he could look back in reality on days like those we were then living, which would have become golden to him.

"It was a great world in the days of Solomon," he said.

"BUT isn't it a fine world now?" I asked, looking at Flane and Joyeuse, who were sitting together in the sunshine.

"It is hard and commonplace," said the Count. "There is no poetry in it. What do we have in this sea now? Hurrying mail-boats filled with silly officials and soldiers, round-the-world cruise-ships with tired folk who can't amuse themselves at home, ugly tankers carrying oil for airplanes to splatter death on towns. But in the past there was romance." He was silent for a moment; then he spoke: *"For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks."*

I didn't agree with the Count, but I didn't tell him that I thought different. Of course the words of the Book of Kings were nice words, but I was sure that we were on a journey that was nearly as good as the journeys made by the ships of Tharshish. And I bet that my uncles, Thurland and Flane, thought the same. Also John Jefferson Martin, who had been told about the pirogues that carried the pearls and emeralds and rubies up the dark Mekong. Martin's eyes bulged when Thurland told him about those pirogues.

YELLOW-FACED Schiemann and his friend Bruden had nothing to say to us; Captain Oudegeest was very sulky, and showed his dislike of the monk; the sailor with the big ear-lobes watched us whenever we were on the deck. And in this air of suppressed hate we rolled through the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and came to Aden.

The Count quoted a few lines about Aden as we came close to it. I think they were written by a poet named Kipling, but I'm not sure.

Old Aden, like a barrack stove
That no one's lit, for years an' years.

I had never seen a barrack stove, but I knew what was meant. For Aden is a place where the little devils of loneliness and despair might make their home. Hard and heartless is that town on the bare rocky coast, a place where the germs of war and hate are bred. The Lord made it a hatching-ground for both, denying it grass and trees and water, and toasting it daily with a sun that dries the brains of the poor devils that have to live there. For the British troops that are in Aden are there for punishment, it being a station where the tough boys are sent to make them tougher, and a better place could not be found.

The *Van Tromp* had to unload some machinery, so my Uncle Flane offered to take Martin and myself out to see the great cement-lined tanks that the Queen of Sheba is supposed to have had built while waiting for a note from King Solomon. Flane had asked Joyeuse to accompany us, but she thought the heat was too great.

We reached the landing-stage where a crowd of English soldiers stood around with nothing to do but stare at the ships in the harbor; and we were standing together, looking at the camel pulling the town water-cart, when something happened. A small devil-fish, of the sort the natives eat, was thrown from some spot to the left of us, and it struck my uncle on the chest, splattering him with water, and also putting a few scales and bits of slime on the jacket of a big Highlander who was close to us.

The Highlander gave a yell of rage and looked around to see who had thrown the thing, his face as red as a boiled lobster. He made a move forward, but my uncle put out a hand and restrained him.

"It was intended for me," said Flane.

"But, mon, will ye be looking at me jacket!" cried the Scotchman. "I'll be pullin' the muckin' head off the black-faced devil!"

But Flane held him, pushing him to the rear as he walked toward the man who had thrown the devil-fish. And the man was no stranger to us. He was the black-browed brute who had come aboard the *Van Tromp* at Suez in the company of Schiemann.

NOW the soldiers, who had nothing to do, and were loafing in the sad way of soldiers, became as bright as hornets when they heard the yell of the Highlander and saw the possibility of a fight. They looked from the black-browed Bruden to Flane, weighing them up in their minds, and they gurgled like children. For Flane and Bruden were two big men who looked like fighters; and something told the soldiers there was a hate of which they knew nothing behind the throwing of the slimy devil-fish.

"To the yard!" they cried in chorus. "The yard, where the police can't see it!"

Quick and smart were those boys, and it looked to me as if they had handled many a fight around that landing-stage. There was an enclosed yard with a big gate and a wall some fifteen feet in height; and into this yard they hustled Bruden and Flane. The soldier hurriedly closing the gate wished to put me outside, but Martin objected, and I was pulled within and the gate clanged.

The big Highlander and Martin were Flane's seconds, and two soldiers seconded Bruden. And from what he said to them as they pulled his shirt over his head, they must have thought they had a winner. For they grinned when he whispered to them, telling them, I suppose, that he would give my uncle a fine thrashing.

And it didn't look such an easy matter for Flane. For Bruden was big, with great arms on which the muscles stood up, so that one glancing at him quick, would think he was deformed. And by the way he acted, it looked as if he knew the business of fighting; for when the soldier lads appointed a referee, he didn't listen to the words of caution at all, being so eager to get at it.

"Now," said the referee, "let's have a fair fight, gentlemen. No cat-scratching or bear-hugging. Let 'er go!" Another soldier beat on a piece of tin that took the place of a bell, and the fight was on.

Bruden thought to make short work of my uncle. He hurled himself across the patch of sun-baked earth, and he started an overarm punch as he came—a punch that would have cracked the jaw of Flane if it had landed, which it didn't. For Flane made a leap forward and got inside it, his own right fist landing with a soft thud on the nose of the other. He ducked under a left counter; dancing clear, he took a long straight stab at the nose and landed again.

The big Highlander shouted approval, the spots on his jacket making his sympathy for my uncle greater than it would have been for an ordinary stranger. "Do it again, me bonnie laddie!" he cried, and Flane took him at his word.

Bruden was mad then. The grin was wiped off his ugly face, and a look of murder was planted there instead. He was puzzled by the quickness of Flane, for my uncle was a hornet that jumped in when he had a chance, and then sprang clear, leaving the effects of his sting behind him. And the soldiers gurgled with delight; and the hot mad sun of Aden blazed down on the yard; and from without came the shouts of Arabs, and above the shouts was a hammering on the big door, the military police having got word that something was going on in the yard.

BRUDEN rushed and grabbed Flane around the waist. He lifted him from the ground and tried to throw him over his head in spite of the referee, who struggled to pull the big arms from my uncle's waist. But Flane wasn't troubled. If the fellow wanted wrestling, he could have it; and as I stared at the

two, my mind went back to the night in Marrakech when Flane wrestled Ahmed Mansour the golden-skinned Arab on a roof-top. The feet of Flane left the ground, and Bruden gathered himself for a mighty hoist; but as he did so, something happened to him. It might have been a trick of ju-jitsu, but I am not sure. Anyhow, the big arms of him loosened for an instant, and in that instant Flane wriggled clear, and attacked.

One, two, three! Bruden stumbled backward with Flane after him. "Would you throw a fish at me?" screamed Flane, landing blow after blow, not letting the other get set for a moment. "I'll wager you'll have trouble in smelling the next one!" he shouted, as a tremendous wallop landed on Bruden's nose—his guard being useless to protect his face from the storm of blows.

THE big Highlander was crazy with joy. The soldiers were on their toes yelling, and the military police were climbing over the gate and over the walls, swearing as they dropped down into the yard. Bruden was running—running round and round the ring, till at last Flane caught up with him and dropped him with a clip under the ear.

It looked as if there'd be a dozen fights to follow. For the military police were mad at having to climb the wall, and madder still that they had been kept away from a good fight; and to cap the uproar, some joker threw another bit of stale fish at the jacket of the big Highlander, and he was nearly insane because he couldn't find out which of his mates did it. And there was murder in the air, the hot, throbbing, suffocating air that might have come out of the ventilators of hell.

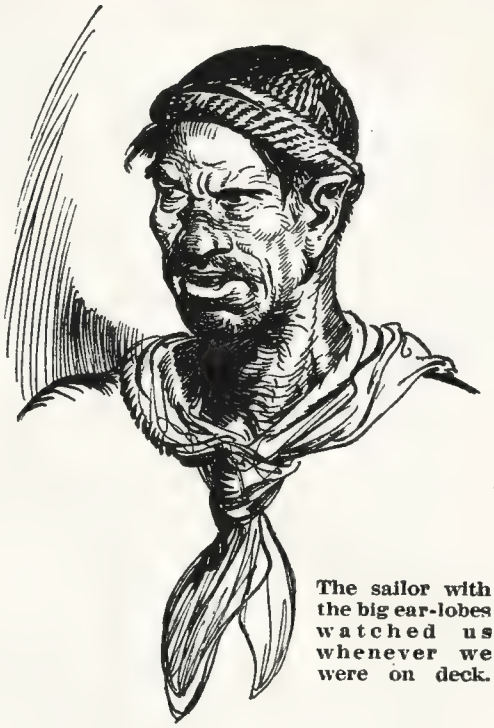
"We'll cut out the visit to the tanks," said Flane as he pulled on his coat. "This is a bad town."

We pushed our way through the milling soldiers, who were arguing and shouting at each other; and we got a boat at the landing and were rowed back to the *Van Tromp*.

"You're back quick," said Thurland, when we climbed the ladder.

"They didn't like us," growled Flane; and that was all, as far as I know, that he said about the fight.

The *Van Tromp* had unloaded her machinery and was ready to move on, but the Captain waited for Bruden. The siren screamed, but we could see no hurrying passenger at the landing.



The sailor with the big ear-lobes watched us whenever we were on deck.

Schiemann, field-glasses to eyes, studied the town and tried to cool the temper of Captain Oudegeest.

The Captain, cursing all passengers, signaled the engine-room, but at the very moment the *Van Tromp* swung for the outer sea, a boat left the landing-stage, the four Arab oarsmen flailing the water madly. It was Bruden—Bruden with a bandaged head! He had to be assisted up the ladder, and he wabbled a little as he went to his cabin.

My Uncle Thurland looked at Flane. But Flane was studying the shore-line running down to Steamer Point. Flane could be very silent at times.

CHAPTER XIV

Toward Rangoon

ON the chart in the saloon of the *Van Tromp* were lines which showed the course of the winds in the different seas; and looking at them, I often thought that a chart showing the winds of hate that blew around the *Van Tromp* would be interesting. For winds of hate were surely there as we moved across the Indian Ocean and rolled up the Bay of Bengal. They came from the cabin of Schiemann and Bruden, puffs of fine fury that you could feel as they passed. And Captain Oudegeest, for some reason or other, took a great dislike to one and

all of us, but especially the bonze. Yes, especially the bonze. When the Captain saw the old monk on the deck, he would turn his head and spit into the scuppers, and the black eyes of the ancient would glitter with hate as he observed him.

And the sailor with the big lobes watched us with no love on his face; and the shadowy officer who was called the doctor, and who was always half-drunk, didn't like us at all, he having got a quick push from Flane when he annoyed Joyeuse by trying to flirt with her.

The bonze was the root of all the trouble. Aye, of every little bit of it. That change in him that we noticed when the *Van Tromp* entered the Canal became more evident with each league we covered. There went out from him a feeling of mystery and power—went out over the ship. The Dutch steward, who had grinned at him when he first came aboard, was now afraid of him. The first officer of the steamer would never pass the monk if there was another way round; and the sailors would stand in little knots and stare at him when he was on the deck.

But the old man seemed to be blind to the fact that the whole ship was interested in him. He went through his exercises of breathing in a corner of the deck, and he made no attempt to speak to anyone but the Count. Of his food he was particular. The water that he drank he put in the sunshine for thirty minutes before he drank it, so that it could be made "alive" by the rays of the sun; and the wheat he ate he placed for some days in a little water till it germinated, eating it then because it too became "alive" and was filled with a new strength. This the Count explained to Joyeuse and to me.

"The *Hatha Yoga* has been practiced in the East for thousands of years," said the Count. "There are men who can do things that seem supernormal because they have concentrated for years on getting control of their bodies. They can regulate the beating of their hearts, and raise or lower their pulse at will."

"Can he do that?" asked Joyeuse.

"I think he can," answered the Count.

IT was on a morning when we were within two days' steam of Rangoon that Captain Oudegeest stirred the temper of the bonze. The Captain was walking around the deck while the old man was examining a dish of wheat that showed the faintest trace of sprouting. The Captain was in a bad humor. He thrust out a big boot and kicked the dish overboard.

The monk sprang to his feet, and the Captain moved back from him as if afraid of something that he saw in the glittering eyes. Then the Captain cried out something in Dutch that sounded like a yelp of fear; and it was that yelp that roused the Count, who was sleeping in a deck-chair.

The Count took one look at the monk and the Captain; then he ran swiftly toward them. The right hand of the old-man, thin and clawlike, was moving upward as it had moved on the night in the Villa Mille Fleurs when he had snapped his fingers in the face of the guard that had played him false—moving up slowly in the same frightening manner, the palm turned outward.

The Count reached the side of the old man. He caught the thin wrist of the monk and jerked the hand downward, speaking swiftly and earnestly.

THE monk listened; the anger left his face; he turned and walked away. Captain Oudegeest had staggered back against the rail. White-faced and silent he stood, when the Count turned to him.

"You fool!" cried the Count. "What did you do to him?"

"I—I," stammered the Captain, "why, I joost kicked a dish of his tamned wheat off my ship."

"You nearly kicked yourself into hell," snapped the Count.

The Captain did not speak. He turned and went slowly to his cabin. He appeared stunned. A sailor bending an awning over the deck had seen the incident and spread the story around the ship. The crew whispered to each other, and stared at the monk.

The Captain ate his meals in his cabin during the two days that followed the incident. We hardly caught a glimpse of him till the *Van Tromp* shouldered into the forest of masts at the mouth of the Rangoon River, and the great shining pile of the Shwe Dagôn pagoda dazzled our eyes.

Here was the real East—the East we had dreamed of. It came to us, drugging our senses, stirring mad dreams, giving to us a belief in the story of the monk so that my uncles, Thurland and Flane, and also John Jefferson Martin, drooled like hounds within reach of their prey. For just around the corner of the tongue of land that is the Malay Peninsula was

Saigon; and beyond Saigon was the mysterious Angkor, and the great Mekong up which had gone the long pirogues laden with treasures so wonderful that the very description of them took one's breath.

"As Johnny Riley said when they put the rope round his neck, 'It won't be long now,'" muttered Thurland.

Flane nodded, and squared his shoulders. He was standing with Joyeuse, their eyes turned upon the Shwe Dagôn. I think the strangeness of Rangoon with all the clamor of the "Pool" frightened Joyeuse. She put out her little hand and touched the sleeve of Flane's coat; then the big hand of my uncle stole up and swallowed it as if it were something that his strong fingers were hungry for. I knew then that Joyeuse loved Flane, and that he worshiped her.

We said no good-by's to Captain Oudegeest. And we didn't trouble about the yellow-faced Schiemann and the black-browed Bruden. The magic of the East had us, bringing a confidence that was surprising, for it seemed that the very fact that you longed for something would bring it to you, for that same longing is the religion of the Orient. A fine lazy religion! You just sit and yearn and yearn and yearn, whispering your desires to the old stone gods, giving them a wilted flower or a few grains of rice, hoping to stir their generosity to give you something that a little hustle on your own part would get you in a tenth of the time you spent in asking the gods.

CHAPTER XV

Tohsâroth, the Holy One

NOW the bonze had to visit the Shwe Dagôn pagoda, for the Shwe Dagôn is a living, throbbing thing that cannot be treated with contempt. There it is, with its great pelt of gold, squatting in the sunshine, the stream of prayers from millions going up into the hot mad sunshine of Burma. And with the prayers go up the incense from thousands of smoking sticks, and the odor of the flowers that are piled around the stone gods—the stone gods that have a sort of cynical grin on their faces as if they knew that the business was foolish, and that nothing would come of the praying and the offerings. Nothing at all.

The Count wished to hunt around for a steamer to take us to Saigon, but the bonze would do nothing till he went to

the pagoda. And dressed now in the yellow robe of his order, he led us forward in a manner that showed he had been there before. Hundreds of times before! And his knowledge of the place, together with the throb and the passion that we felt around us, made a backing for his great story of the flight from Angkor, so that the smallest grain of doubt fled from our minds, and like lambs we followed him—followed him barefooted into the great pagoda, and into as fine a mess of trouble as one could think of!

The bonze left us to go into an inner shrine, where a few hairs from the head of the Buddha are kept, and into which we couldn't go, being unbelievers. So we stood and sniffed the incense, and the perfume of jasmine and lotus and crushed marigolds, wondering how long the old man would take with his prayers, because if we could judge by the looks of those who passed to and fro with naked feet, the sooner we left there, the better.

Ten minutes went by—fifteen, twenty. Martin picked up a flower that had dropped on the floor, but a monk snatched it from his hand and placed it before a stone figure.

"They don't like us here," said Thurland. "We had—"

My uncle didn't finish his remark, for at that moment the bonze appeared, and with him were fifty or sixty yellow-robed monks that ran around him, touching him whenever they could with their long brown fingers, and gurgling with holy joy as they did so. Gurgling and jabbering, and calling him by a name we had never heard before. A queer name, that later we found to be the same as

one of the four gods that rule the Cambodian paradise. It was *Tohsâroth.* To us he had been "Methuselah," the "Ancient," the "Old One," or any other foolish name that came to our mind; but to them he was Tohsâroth, the holy one, and we were impressed.

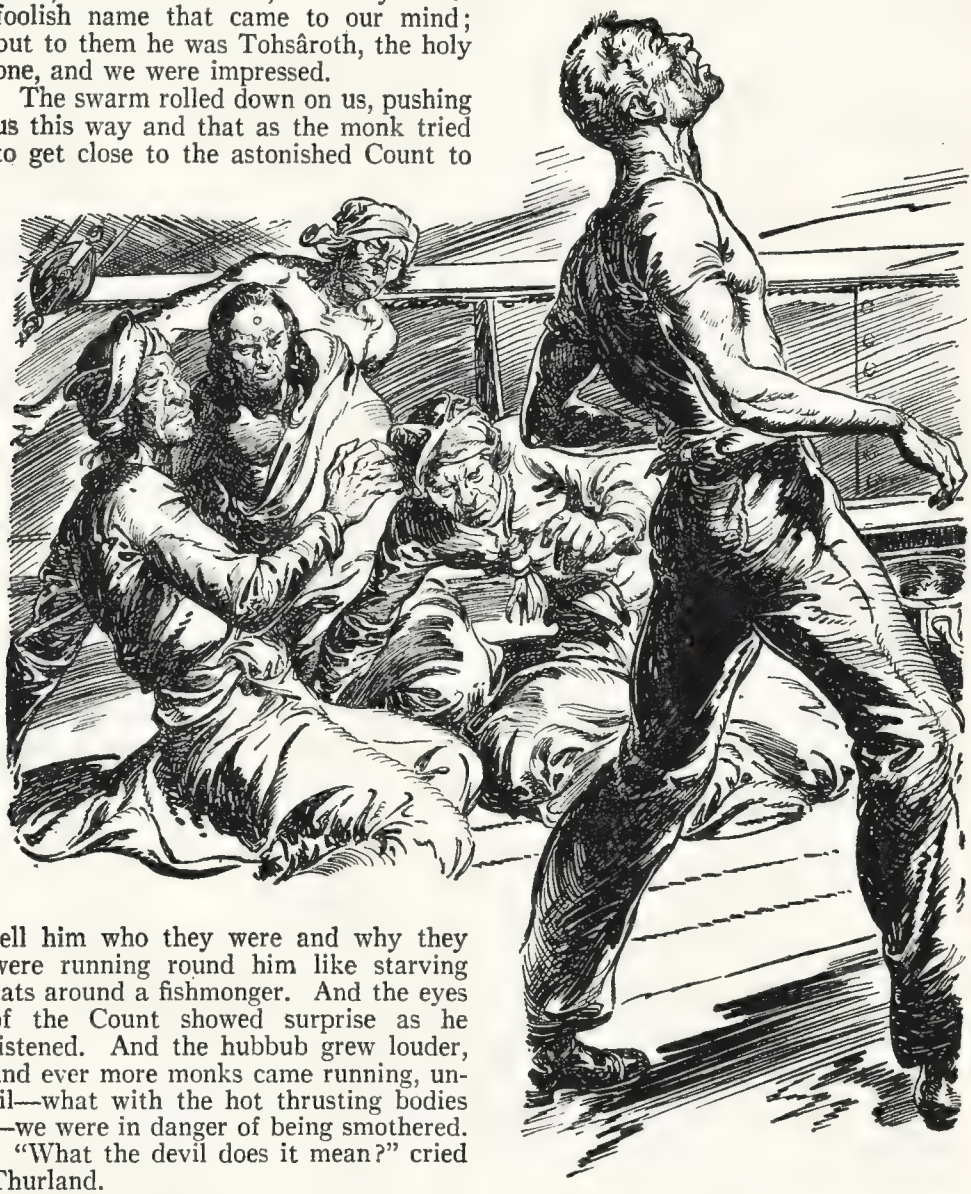
The swarm rolled down on us, pushing us this way and that as the monk tried to get close to the astonished Count to tell him who they were and why they were running round him like starving cats around a fishmonger. And the eyes of the Count showed surprise as he listened. And the hubbub grew louder, and ever more monks came running, until—what with the hot thrusting bodies—we were in danger of being smothered.

"What the devil does it mean?" cried Thurland.

"They're a pilgrim party from his own district," shouted the Count. "They're from Pnom-Penh! *From Pnom-Penh on the Mekong!"*

The words choked us. The bunch of lean, starved-looking fellows that ran around the bonze were from the capital of Cambodia, from the town that was within a few hours of Angkor itself! They had seen the evening star rise and rest upon the mysterious ruins! They had squatted on the great terrace from which the king and his nobles had taken their departure in the long ago!

For days the ancient had watched the mate kicking the half-starved pilgrims. Now the mate was going to get his! Aye!



We were impressed, astounded, bewildered by the happening. We were in the company of over half a hundred men who were actual residents of the place toward which we had been moving since the bright morning we had fled Neuilly in fear of the police!

TO us, it seemed we were already there. The pushing, chattering army that surrounded the bonze gave a new quality to his tale, a new glamour and force that brought also a fear to us—lest

we be tricked or outmatched by others who had heard fragments of the tale.

"Get him out of here," said Thurland to the Count. "There'll be a riot if we stay here."

The Count took the arm of the monk and led him down the great stone stairway, but the army streamed after him. Fighting to get next to him. Crying his name: "Tohsâroth! *Tohsâroth!*" Clawing and scratching at Thurland and Martin, who tried to discourage them. Pushing flowers into the old man's face and down his neck, running in front of him and dropping petals that he could tread on, and which they then picked up and held to their lips.

"I'll be damned if I ever saw a homecoming like this!" growled Thurland. "You'd think the old fellow had won the heavyweight championship of the world."

WE had left Flane and Joyeuse at the foot of the stairway, because Joyeuse didn't like the idea of going farther into the great pagoda; and now, to the astonishment of the two of them, we streamed down like a rabble that is trying to rescue a friend from the police.

And that description is not far from the truth. For the new-found friends of the bonze wanted the old man to leave the Count and stay with them, and that didn't suit us at all. We had traveled a long way with the ancient, and we were determined to stick to him. Tohsâroth, holy or unholy, was our property.

Thurland shouted the news to Flane as the mob swept them along, Flane doing his utmost to protect Joyeuse from the crazy devils who wished to walk close to the bonze. Into the narrow streets went the human flood, the shaved heads of the monks shining in the fierce

sunlight, pushing a way through Chinese, Sikhs, Burmese, Karens, Hindoos and Malays. And now it came close to a riot; for here and there the mob knocked over the stall of a man selling rice-cakes or sweets, and the devil's own argument started as to who would pay for it.

The Count shouted to Thurland what Tohsâroth said about mob and the wishes of the mob. The pilgrims from Pnom-Penh were starting home that very afternoon as deck-passengers on a specially chartered coastal packet that had brought them down from Saigon, and they wished our Methuselah to travel with them. They not only wished it—they demanded it; and they were prepared to give battle to us or any other body that tried to take him away from them. He was a super-bonze, it seemed, and it was a compulsory service that they were called upon to perform.

"And what does he think?" cried Thurland, when the Count explained.

"He wants to go with them," shouted the Count.

"Then we'll go with him and the mob," said Thurland promptly.

DOWN the narrow streets to the waterfront, upsetting stools and sweetmeat stalls, carrying with us all the poor patient folk that came up against us. Shrieks and prayers and curses. The proud pilgrims from Pnom-Penh shouting out the virtues of the ancient, our ancient that we had brought back to the East—the East that knew his value, that respected him, that worshiped him as a person upon whom the stone gods had conferred immortality.

Police fought the procession with fists and truncheons. They were thrust aside or carried with us. Vainly half a dozen of them made a rush to get to Tohsâroth, thinking that he was a sort of queen bee of the swarm, and that if he could be grabbed and put somewhere, then the mob would break up and go home. But the pilgrims bit and scratched to protect him; and with chants and the banging of little tambours and the ringing of bells, we reached the gangway of the oldest and dirtiest steamer I had ever seen.

It was the *Kelantan,* and it had brought the pilgrims around from Saigon. It was a trollop of the China Sea, a thing that wise sharks would follow, their ears listening to the groaning of her old timbers.

The skipper was a huge Dane, and every man on her was of the same nationality. Stripped to his waist, the Captain shouted and struck at the pilgrims when they stood to chatter on the gangplank. A mate as big as himself pushed them around on the dirty deck; cursing and kicking the poor devils when they didn't obey his orders. To him the pilgrims were cattle; his hand and his boot were heavy on their ill-fed bodies.

THE Count attempted to speak to the Captain, but the Captain had a contempt for small men and pushed him aside. Thurland took the matter up then, and there was something on Thurland's face that brought politeness from the Dane. He said he had no cabin accommodations for anyone, no matter what sum they offered; and as for carrying a female, he had sworn by all the Norse gods that he would never ship one on a boat he bossed. "Not half a vummin!" he roared. "They is to me the bad lucks!"

Thurland spoke to the Count. "Let Flane and Joyeuse and Jimmy go on another boat," he said. "You and I and Martin will stay with this swarm."

"Please let me stay!" I cried.

"It'll be rough," said Thurland.

"I don't mind," I cried. "Let Martin stay with Joyeuse and Flane."

The mate was chasing the last stragglers onto the wharf, grabbing carelessly at a man here and there, and thrusting him toward the gangplank. He caught several poor devils who belonged to Rangoon, thinking to make up the number that he wanted; and the captured ones screamed with terror at the thought of going to sea in the *Kelantan.* And well they might! One required the fine spirit of religious sacrifice to sail on that boat, and perhaps the local monks that saw the Shwe Dâgon pagoda every day of their lives didn't have the same fervor that brought the Pnom-Penh crowd! Anyhow, they kicked and squealed when the mate tried to pull them aboard. The steamer had brought seventy-five pilgrims, and the mate wanted seventy-five to take back.

Thurland and the Count spoke to Flane, Joyeuse and Martin. They were to take the fastest boat for Saigon, and if they got there before us, which was a certainty, they were to wait till we arrived.

"And you might have to wait a hell of a long while," growled Thurland, turning to take a look at the old trull that was to carry us.

We shook their hands and went aboard to see the Danish captain. He was in a hot dispute with his engineer, the latter swearing that the engines were in such a condition that the *Kelantan* couldn't cross the Gulf of Martaban, much less reach Saigon.

"We're going with you," said Thurland quietly.

"You's vat?" screamed the Captain.

"You heard me," said Thurland. "We're buying deck passage with the pilgrim folk."

The Dane put a huge hand on my uncle's chest and started to push him toward the gangplank, but he didn't push him far. Thurland caught the forefinger of the Captain, a forefinger as big and as stout as the leg of a small chair, and he bent it back with such quickness and force that the Captain howled with the pain it brought.

"I don't like people putting their hands on me," said Thurland, letting go of the fleshy chair-leg. "Now be sensible and say quick how much the three of us will pay for a ride on this undertaker's barge?"

The Captain rubbed his forefinger and glared at my uncle. "Seven hundred Straits dollars!" he cried; and although that was about ten times the price he charged per head to the pilgrims, the Count paid.

The *Kelantan* was ready to move on, the mate having made a tally and found that he had seventy-five passengers; and if they weren't the same seventy-five that he had brought to Rangoon, he didn't care. He ordered the gangplank pulled in and the ropes cast off; the engines coughed and we edged into the "Pool." Above the screaming of the jostling hundreds that were interested in our Methuselah, we heard the voice of Flane, who was standing with Joyeuse and Martin.

"Pleasant voyage!" he cried. "It's fine to think of you traveling in such luxury."

IT was strange about the start of that voyage. To me, and I think to Thurland and the Count, there came a belief that we were on the last lap of the journey. That we were really on the dark Mekong, up which the pirogues had taken the treasures and the fleeing nobles. Perhaps it was the presence of the pilgrims that created the atmosphere, that brought to us the feeling that we should see at any minute the banks of that great river stumbling down to the sea through the wild passes of the unknown country. The banks with their high trees in which are thousands and thousands of monkeys sitting so close together that their tails hang down like a fringe from the branches on which they squat. For that is how the ancient described them when telling of the flight from Angkor-Thom. And I thought if I shut my eyes, I could hear the screaming of the flamingoes and cormorants that followed the pirogues.

Yes, Thurland thought the same. For when we rolled out of the mouth of the Rangoon River, he looked at me and smiled. "We'll soon be there now," he said quietly. "I mean at Klang-Nan."

CHAPTER XVI

The Monk Strikes a Second Time

"HOLY men," said my Uncle Thurland, looking at the pilgrims on the *Kelantan,* "can stand sufferings that would kill strong men like myself, who have no saintliness to boast of."

Thurland was right. The mob of the *Kelantan* went through enough physical torture to earn each one a seat in his particular paradise, and they made no complaints at all. They were filled with a fine fervor that made it impossible for them to register pains and aches, and they had their stomachs under such control that a handful of rice was a feast.

And they had Tohsâroth to look at—Tohsâroth whose presence brought the thrills of the other world, to which they were fighting their way with prayer and fasting. They clustered around him on the dirty deck of the steamer, and when he spoke, their heads were thrust toward him as if the missing of a single word was a sin. Our Methuselah was a god to them.

The *Kelantan* stumbled down the Gulf of Martaban, felt her way nervously by the little islands of the Mergui Archipelago and headed for the Malacca Strait. And the mob prayed and chanted hymns and slept. And the Captain and the engineer quarreled nine times a day about the engines; and whenever the big mate was in a temper, he kicked a pilgrim; and the pilgrim would howl and look at the ancient, whose black eyes, glittering with anger, followed the mate.

"I hope," said Thurland, "that the mate doesn't try to make a football out

of our old friend. I had better caution him."

The Count nodded, and Thurland buttonholed the mate as he went by and spoke quietly to him. "Listen, laddie," said Thurland. "I see you are a bit handy with your feet, so I'll give you a warning. If you kick the old man, you'll be kicking dynamite."

"I kicks who I pleases!" roared the mate.

"Good," said Thurland; "but don't say I didn't warn you."

The mate, to show his contempt for the advice, booted a sick pilgrim into the scuppers, and spat at a small gilded Buddha. A tough man was the mate.

"There was a fellow like him in Kerry once," said Thurland. "A chap so handy with his feet that he wore the toes out of his boots kicking dogs and cats and children that came in his path. One night going home from a fair, he saw what he thought was a small boy sleeping in the hedge, and he gave him a root with the toe of his brogue. The little fellow hopped up, and the kicker saw then that it was a leprechaun.

"'Why did you do that?' asked the leprechaun.

"'I don't know,' said the kicking gentleman. 'It's in me blood, I think.'

"The leprechaun waved a little hand at the fellow's feet; then, with a grin, he said: 'Lift your boots, me *bouchal.*'

"The man tried to lift his boots, but he could only get them three inches off the ground. Not an inch higher, try as he would.

"'Now,' said the leprechaun, 'you're cured of your bad habits, and if you have the desire to kick a sleeping body in a hedge, you can't. On your way now, because I'm a little tired.'

"The man shuffled off home, pushing one foot after the other; and from that day to the day he died, he went round in the same fashion. I saw him when I was a little boy, and my own father told me the story."

WE bought food from the Captain. At least, we bought what provisions he had, and we cooked them on a charcoal stove on deck. Rice and canned beans and biscuits and Danish cheese and coffee, and once we had a chicken from the mate's private crate. The pilgrims saved a little rice to feed the chickens, forgetting that the owner of the birds was a brute who ill-treated them at every opportunity.

There were cockroaches on the *Kelantan* that were as big as sparrows; and there were yellow scorpions, also bedbugs that had been with the steamer for years and years. And there were humorous ticks that burrowed under your skin and laid eggs there. The pilgrims wouldn't kill them, it being against their religious teaching; and the cockroaches, scorpions, bugs and ticks knew that they were safe and took liberties.

But we, like the pilgrims, had something to cheer us up and make us forget the troubles of the moment. Something that brought colorful dreams in the steaming days, and in the hot nights when the poor devils moaned prayers in their sleep, and the crazy engines pounded, and the Captain drank gin-slings and cursed the sea. We were on the last lap of our voyage. Thurland danced a jig as the cross-winds from the China Sea rolled the *Kelantan* backward and forward till the pilgrims thought she would roll so far that she couldn't straighten herself. And they weren't far wrong in thinking that. For wicked winds came across from Borneo and slammed the old thing in the ribs so that she staggered under the attack.

"Straight ahead of us," said Thurland, "is Cochin China, with the Mekong pouring itself into the sea. If nothing happens in the next sixty hours, we'll be going up the river like the pirogues that fled the plague. Mother o' me! Like the pirogues that fled the plague!"

THE happening Thurland feared took place when we had passed the island of Poulo Condove, where they get swallows' nests that are worth their weight in gold, to make soup of. We were swinging a little to the east to make Saigon, when the Danish mate got annoyed with a pilgrim, and booted him so hard that the wretch screamed with the pain.

Our Methuselah raised a protest, but the mate was so mad that he wouldn't listen. He continued to kick the pilgrim, and Tohsâroth got to his feet. The mate thought this a sort of challenge, and he made a rush and clipped the old one under the ear.

Thurland let out a roar and made for the mate, swinging his fists as he came. But the mate had never been trained in the use of his hands and had never heard of the Marquis of Queensberry. He was a kicker, knowing tricks with his feet like the French know, and which they

call *savate*. He made a quick leap into the air, bringing his right foot up in a roundabout fashion, and walloping Thurland on the ear with the heavy boot.

It was a fine hefty kick, and it would have brought an elephant to his knees. Thurland dropped as if he had been shot, and the mate leaped forward and handed him a couple of kicks in the ribs before anyone could get close enough to stop him. He was in the act of putting in a third when he stopped and looked at Tohsâroth—looked at him with startled eyes.

The ancient had drawn himself up so that he seemed inches taller, and those eyes of his that had no whites and were like bits of black opal, glowed like the eyes of a cat in the dark. The Count cried out to him and made a rush to stop him from lifting his right hand; but the pilgrims got in the way of the Count and hindered him. And the old one took no notice of the Count's cries, his temper making him deaf to everything. For days he had watched the mate kicking the half-starved pilgrims and spitting on their poor gilded Buddhas, and now the mate was going to get his! Aye!

The lean claw went up slowly, palm toward the sailor; then the long fingers snapped in a curious fashion, and the mate staggered backward against the rail. His face was yellow; his big mouth was open; and his eyes were pushed out like the eyes of a crab. Clinging to the rail, he stared for a few moments at the old bonze; then he slipped into the scuppers.

The Count screamed a warning as a seaman moved forward. "Don't touch him!" cried the Count. "Wait!"

The man stood back. My Uncle Thurland was on his feet now. He moved toward the mate in the scuppers, leaned over him; turned, and spoke to the Count. "He's dead," said Thurland.

The Captain of the *Kelantan* stumbled down from the bridge, swearing frightfully as he came. He thrust the pilgrims out of his way, pushed the body of the mate with a big sea-boot, looked into his face, then turned and stared at the old bonze.

"By God!" he cried. "I know! I know once't that swine bane come on my sheep! I know! Heem one bloody killer! Tohsâroth the Devil! I chuck him in de sea! Heem Tohsâroth the Death-giver!"

He made a rush at the ancient; but Thurland was in the way now—repaying

the action of the monk in saving him from the boots of the mate. "Steady!" said Thurland. "Steady, me bold gossoon! What do you think our nice mate died of?"

"Plague!" screamed the skipper. "*Plague!* I haf heard of this swine. He kills. He snaps his fingers, *so*—an' men die! I chuck the swine overboard! He killed my mate!"

But Thurland held the big arms of the skipper, speaking softly to him as he struggled. "If you think that, me *bouchal*," he whispered, "I wouldn't lay a finger on him. It would be you that we'd be tossing overboard after he had finished with you. Be quiet now, and let us think what we should do."

The Captain saw the danger of pulling any rough stuff on the old man, who had now returned to his seat. There he was, mumbling prayers to himself, his wrinkled face upturned, looking so quiet that no one would suspect him of sending a man into the other world a few minutes before. But the lads from Pnom-Penh, who clustered round him as if they would claw the eyes out of the Captain, knew. They knew that he had, by some magic or other, wiped out the mate who had booted them whenever they got in his way.

The Captain was quiet now. He stood with Thurland and the Count looking at the dead man, and two-thirds of the crew stood with them. The news had gone

down into the engine-room, and a few of the boys that were feeding the crazy engine climbed up to have a look. One of them, wearing only dungaree pants and a sweat-cloth around his neck, pushed me out of the way. I looked up at him, a little angry because he had handled me roughly, and I had difficulty in choking the cry that came to my lips. Under the swipes of coal-dust and sweat, I recognized his ugly mug. It was the man Bruden that Flane had thrashed in the dock-yard at Aden!

They straightened out the mate and placed him on a hatch-cover. The Captain, Thurland, and the Count were whispering together. The crew, heads thrust forward, tried to catch the words of the three. The Captain seemed frightened; the crew didn't seem too pleased. The angry chief engineer had come up from below, and he pushed himself into the argument.

Thurland and the Count suggested that the Captain should at once bury the body of the mate, lest the infection should spread; but the Captain, who had a filthy copy of a little book of rules issued by the Board of Trade, said that he couldn't. He was the skipper of a coastal boat, and he had to bring the body into port.

"Then it's quarantine?"

"It's damn' well so!" screamed the Captain. "Three weeks, one bloody month!" Suddenly he broke down and commenced to cry. Tears as big as hailstones rolled down his cheeks.

The chief engineer broke the silence with a burst of loud laughter. The Captain recovered himself, swore fiercely at the engineer and stumbled up the ladder to the bridge. The *Kelantan,* heading in for the entrance to the Saigon River, was then abreast of the mouths of the Mekong, the river of our dreams. Off to port the great stream, seventh largest river in the world, was pouring itself into the China Sea through half a dozen openings.

I PUSHED my way to Thurland's side. Bruden had been ordered below by the chief engineer. I whispered the news.

"Are you sure?" asked Thurland.

"I'm certain," I answered.

My uncle was quiet for a minute, staring at a brown haze far off to the west of us, a haze that became solid and firm till we knew it as the coast of Cochin China. "The trouble is getting no thinner," said Thurland. "And that's what Jamesy Gallagher said about his wife when the reducing medicine didn't work on her. Yes, indeed, Jimmy!"

CHAPTER XVII

We Take French Leave

WE entered the Saigon River with the yellow flag flying at the masthead. The *Kelantan* had been squirted with disinfectant till the smell of her brought insulting yells from the passengers and crew of a boat of the Grande Ligne de l'Ouest that passed us as we came into the stream.

We anchored in the middle of the river as the night was coming down, far ahead of us the lights of the city twinkling in the velvety dusk, and from here and there a faint note of music came to us to tell of the gayety that was ashore. For Saigon is the Paris of the East, and the French exiles sit out on the *terrasses* of the cafés and make themselves believe that they are back on the boulevards.

River police in snorting motorboats came alongside and shouted questions through megaphones at the Captain. The health authorities could not come aboard till the next morning, but we were to stay put. If the medical men found that the mate had died of plague, we would be taken to the quarantine station and held there till all danger had passed.

"There is no danger," said the Count, "but it is impossible to convince a medical man that there isn't."

My Uncle Thurland muttered curses and looked at the twinkling lights on the Quai Francis-Garnier, and the line of lamps on the bridges over the Arroyo Chinois that runs into the Saigon River. Thurland was angry, and there was no one on whom he could spill his temper.

"You're certain that was Bruden?" he asked me.

"Quite certain," I said. "He's all smeared with grease and coal-dust, but it's him."

"Well," said Thurland, "if we're quarantined, there's a chance that I'll give him a better hiding than Flane gave him at Aden."

The mention of his brother's name made him turn and look at the lights of the city. "If Flane is here, he'll know we're in trouble," he said softly; "and trouble is a magnet that brings him at a run. Now I wouldn't be surprised—" He paused and thrust his head forward and stared at the dark river-water.

"Wouldn't be surprised at what?" I said.

There was a laugh in Thurland's voice as he whispered his answer. "I wouldn't be surprised to find him nosing about this old tub. He has a brain, Flane has. When he was a boy, they thought of making him into a priest or a professor or something like that; but the moment he heard them planning, he left home and stayed away till they had forgotten about it."

The Count came across the deck, and Thurland whispered his hopes. The Count was thrilled. The possibility of a rescue lifted the sadness from our hearts. Thoughts of a quarantine of three weeks or more was something that weighed hard upon our minds.

The hot heavy night rolled around us —the night with a thousand odors that stirred queer thoughts. We were close to our destination, but the death of the mate had put chains around our hurrying feet. Ahead, some few hours' journey, was Pnom-Penh; and beyond was the mysterious Angkor on which the star of evening looked questioningly down.

I thought that I could see it in the velvety night—see the great towers, the immense stairways, the thousand and one sculptures of the seven-headed serpents, their stone heads spread fanwise, guarding this great shrine of the past. Our nearness to it made me curiously faint.

The tired pilgrims had stretched themselves in long lines on the deck. The Captain had slipped into a drunken stupor. The body of the mate, covered with a blanket soaked in disinfectant, showed in the shadows. The *Kelantan* seemed a boat of death.

AFTER midnight, it was then, that Thurland was roused by the *pit-pit* of a motor-boat that came out of the Arroyo Chinois into the Saigon River. It hung to the shore till it was opposite the *Kelantan;* then the motor was cut suddenly, and in the tremendous silence we thought we heard the creak of oars.

The sound came nearer. That spluttering engine was evidently too noisy for the final approach. The boat was being pushed furtively toward the *Kelantan.*

"That'll be Flane," whispered Thurland. "What a brother for a man to have!" His voice quavered as he spoke. I prayed that it might be Flane, so that Thurland would not be deceived.

Closer, closer came the boat. We saw it dimly on the oily water. It rounded the stern of the *Kelantan,* and the two rowers were plain to us in the dull light thrown by the riding-light—John Martin and Flane.

THURLAND whistled softly. The boat slipped to the side of the steamer. A whisper came up from it.

"Got to be quick," said Flane. "River police."

Thurland had knotted a rope to a stanchion and tossed the other end overboard. Martin grabbed it.

"The bonze?" whispered the Count.

"Leave him to me," said Thurland. "Down you go."

The Count went over the side, slid down the rope and fell into the boat.

"You're next, Jimmy," ordered Thurland, and I followed the Count, more awkwardly if possible, falling into the arms of Martin, who saved me from going overboard.

We stared upward, waiting for Thurland. The Count's excited breathing could be heard above the gurgling of the water against the ship's side. The Count was worried.

"He'll never get him," he whispered.

"He will," said Flane quietly. "Leave it to him. He can do anything."

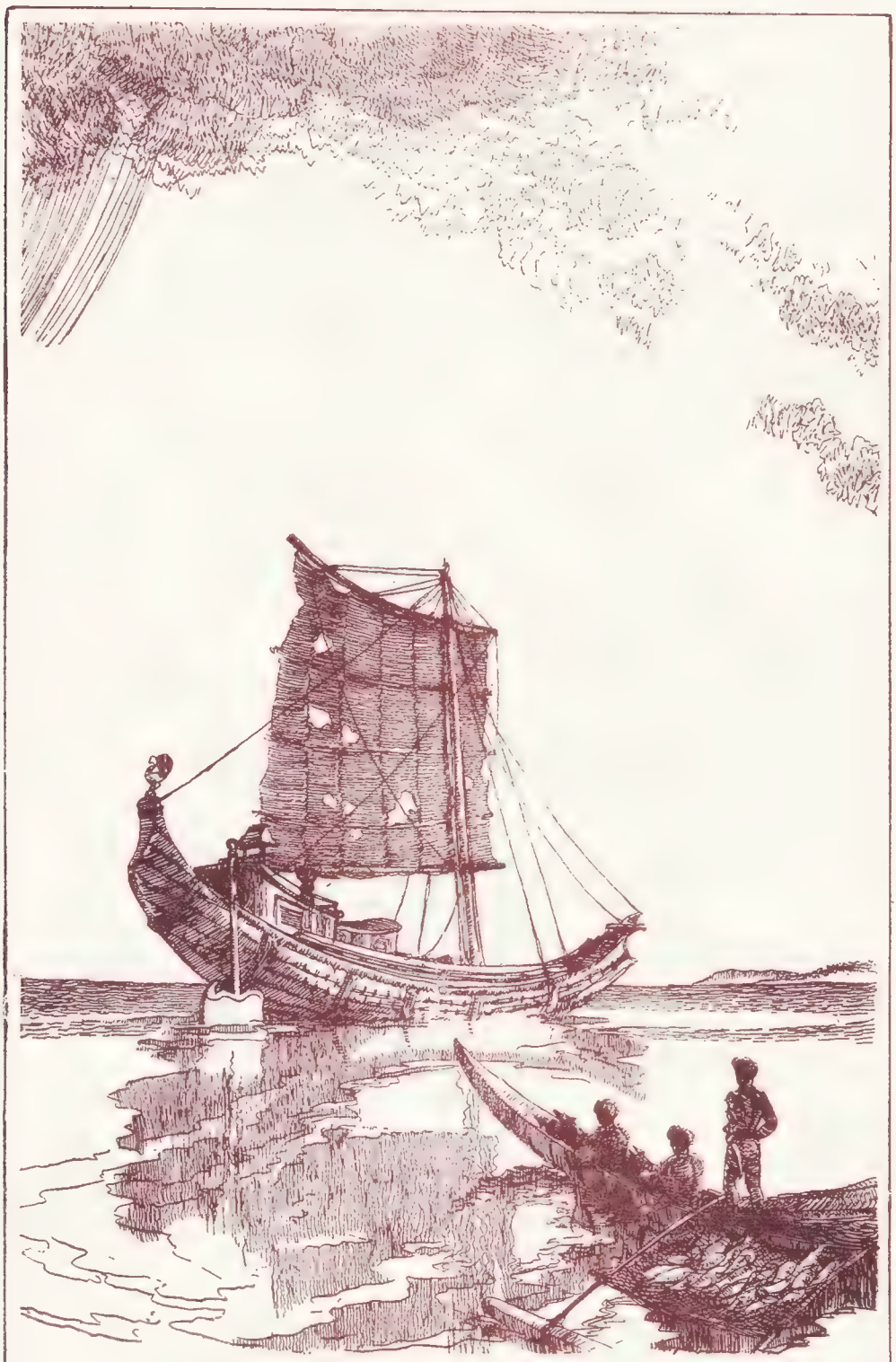
The silence was broken by the querulous chatter of disturbed sleepers. It grew. Some one screamed. There was a shuffling of feet, a cry of alarm; then Thurland appeared on the rail, with a great bundle in his arms.

Holding this bundle with his left arm, he grabbed the rope with his right, twisted his legs around it, and came with the speed of a bullet into the boat.

He gasped out an order to the Count. "Speak to the old devil before he tries any tricks with me!" he cried. "I had to put a cloth over his head. Set that engine going! There'll be hell to play in a minute!"

Martin set the engine going, swung the nose of the boat in the direction of the Arroyo Chinois, and we fled into the night. The drunken skipper fired a bullet at us; the screech of a police whistle came from the wharf of the Messagéries Maritimes, and from the pilgrims rose a prolonged howl that sounded like the yelping of a fox-pack that has lost the scent. Tohsâroth had left them.

Exciting events come thick and fast in the next lively installment of this colorful story—in the forthcoming April issue.



From an etching by Yngve E. Soderberg

The conquest of deep water! Surely here are written some of the most fascinating chapters in all the epic progress of pilgrim mankind.

SHIPS and MEN

By H. BEDFORD-JONES and CAPTAIN L. B. WILLIAMS

III—The Mother Reef

THE moon hung low across the sea that night, as we sat by our driftwood fire.

Out across the Palawan reefs the surf was rolling and muttering, creating dim white streamers of phosphorescence that eddied into the lagoon. Up on the higher shores behind us were other fires; other tourists, who were doing the Philippines on more active schedule, were feasting, indulging in song and dancing, buying knickknacks and curios.

But we sat here by the water, away from all that: Myers of the Constabulary; and old Karlak, Moro of the Moros, who had served ten years in the force and had twice been on long visits to America, before returning to his native village and the fish-nets and the long boats; and I was the third.

Some of the boats lay out there before us, rocking gently under the stars. Off to our left, on the shore, was the rotting carcass of the great boat Karlak had been showing us—one of the last of the famous old Malay stitched boats, of full schooner size, a sea-going craft.

"I've heard tell," said Myers reflectively, "that boats of this kind, stitched together, date from very ancient times, and mark one of the chief developments in the art of ship-building. Too bad, Karlak, that you don't happen to know who first thought up that kind of a boat, and why! Must have been one of your people."

"It was," Karlak said simply. "And I do know."

"What?" I exclaimed. "You mean you have some legend about it?"

Karlak grinned and spat.

"Not legend, but facts," he said, and looked out to sea as he squatted on his hams, his old, lined face a mass of shrewd wrinkles. "It was a man out there on the big mother of the reefs, that lies just over the horizon. And it happened a very long time ago, in the ancient days when all my people were idolaters, before the Prophet of Allah had told the world of the true God, may his name be blessed! This man bore the same name that I bear today, but he was young, and I am old."

"Young enough," said Myers slyly. "I hear that there was a new son born in your house last month."

The words drew a chuckle from Karlak.

"Allah is good, Allah is great," he rejoined complacently. "This was long ago; it was even before the time when yellow barbarians of China traded with these coasts. Only once or twice had these infidels ever been seen by my people, yet at long intervals they had come out of the sea, and they knew these islands."

He fell silent for a time, staring now into the embers of the fire, and I thought he was listening to the faint laughter and the music that drifted down from the village behind. But no. He was listening to the reef-music, as the long endless rollers burst upon the coral. And far greater was the sound out there on the mother of the reefs across the horizon, the long coral islets that broke the sea-surge sweeping in from uncounted leagues, where at low tide were vast expanses of pools and exposed reef.

IN those pools, in the now shallowed lagoons, huge treasure lay trapped at each low tide—treasure of fish and shell and octopus. Strange things drifted up to the mother of the reefs, too, across the trackless ocean. That was why Karlak and his dozen men were out there, so far from the islands, in search of these treasures. Out there in the big hollowed-tree canoe Karlak had built from one huge log, fitted with sail and

outrigger and with ample cargo space for the spoils of the sea.

Karlak, *panjiran* or sea-going chief of the tribe, had found a rich harvest and his ungainly craft was deeply laden. But, despite the risk of delayed departure, for two hours he and his men had been staring out at this queer vessel that rode the tidal currents along the reef. A huge ship, to his eyes; a monstrous thing, with bulging lattice-like sails, with no crew in sight, steering an aimless course and yet ever drawing closer to the opening in the reef. Then fell the calm, with the sea like a burnished shield under the hot sun. The strange, huge ship hung listless.

QUICK! It was their chance! He snapped swift word at his men. They leaped to the great canoe, and running it out, seized paddles and headed for the channel. Icol, war chief of the village, was with him, taking the stroke paddle. As the canoe emerged from the reef, every eye was turned on the ship in momentary paralysis of fear and vivid curiosity. She was not two hundred yards away, unmoving, deserted.

"A trap!" yelped Icol. "A trap of the water devils! Leave her alone."

"She's falling to pieces," said another of the *orang laut*. Sea people have quick eyes. "Battered and smashed. Planks hanging loose. She's not a log, but many logs!"

Karlak stood erect, a lithe, handsome bronze figure who might have been the god of the reefs in person. Many logs indeed! That huge ship was built of hewn logs, of planks innumerable cut from logs. Her idle sails were of woven matting. But she was falling apart; there were huge gaps in her bulwarks, her bows were split, there was no sign of life aboard her.

"Lay in the paddles!" ordered Karlak abruptly, catching a riffle on the water. "Offshore breeze coming up. Step the mast!"

The men leaped to obey, getting the mast stepped, laying the square *carang*, a light but tough woven sail, ready. Karlak stood by the steering paddle; one man to the tacks, four to the halyards. Icol and the others grasped spears and knives.

"Look, *besar!*" cried one of the men, excitedly. "A golden woman devil!"

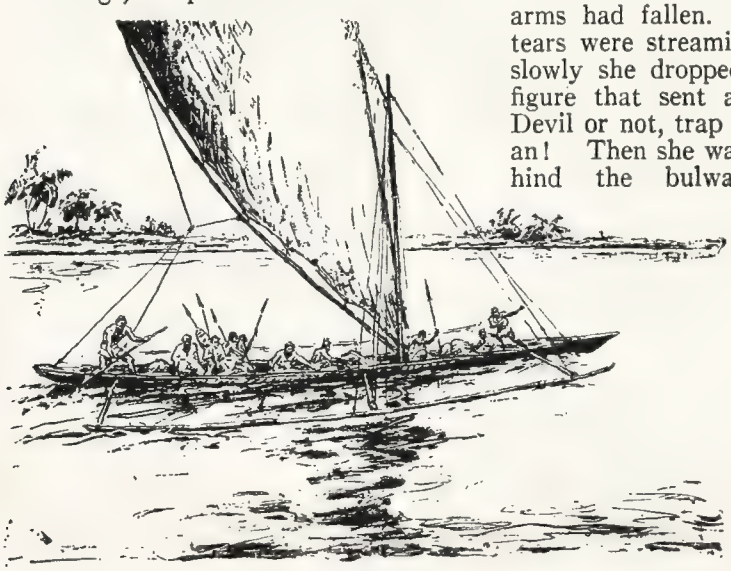
Hearts leaped, eyes strained; Karlak felt his pulses hammer. A figure was crawling up the inclined poop deck of the ship—a lithe, golden, half-clad figure, a woman, lifting arms and waving frantically, a vision of shapely loveliness. The men gaped, until the voice of Icol blared at them in new warning.

"A trap, a trap! Warriors are ready behind those bulwarks, while we make sick-dog's eyes at the woman devil—flee, I tell you! Wake up, Karlak!"

"I am *datu*, not you," grunted Karlak. "I give orders—but you're right. Up with the sail!"

They had the breeze now. The sail went up; Karlak swung his weight on the oar, the canoe whipped around. The brails were let go, the sheets hauled aft, and like a racer the great canoe went hissing and foaming away.

But Karlak looked back. The yellow woman still stood there, though her arms had fallen. Karlak fancied that tears were streaming down her cheeks; slowly she dropped, a dejected, beaten figure that sent a pang through him. Devil or not, trap or not—what a woman! Then she was gone from sight behind the bulwarks, and the canoe



The men gaped, until Icol blared at them in warning: "A trap! Warriors are behind those bulwarks, while we make sick-dog's eyes at the woman devil! Flee, I tell you!"

rushed through the seas toward the islands over the horizon. The ship did not follow. The men breathed freely again. Karlak cursed the squat, powerful figure of Icol in the bow, and looked back again and again, but in vain.

Before the breeze, the ship drifted farther away from the reef again.

Under the shattered and broken bulwark, the yellow woman sat in collapse; tears were indeed glittering on her cheeks, tears of weakness, of utter despair. In all that long stretch of reefs, with its trees and lagoons and glittering white coral strands, she had seen no living creature except these men; and now they were gone....

At the moment, Ming Chu was far from being the "Glorious Pearl" her name bespoke. Her dulled eyes looked along the hot decks. Here lay what remained of her brawny crew of yellow seamen, dead or dying of bubonic plague, the black death. Her father had gone long days ago. Yu the Tiger, that powerful seaman and adventurer who served as mate, had skipped out with the small boat two nights ago. She was alone with the dead and stricken.

Until the breeze failed, she had hoped to get through an opening in the reef. This hope was gone now. The light offshore breeze was beating the shattered hulk farther from the reefs.

FOR a long while she sat, despondent, hopeless, resigned; then feeble voices roused her. She staggered up, gave each of the helpless yellow men a bit of the precious water remaining; then she went to the rail and stared. That canoe with its brown sail had long since vanished. Ming Chu, who had spent most of her life at sea with her father, knew the meaning of the ominous purple cloud lifting in the sky, spreading up from the horizon to the east. Afternoon was passing. The storm would burst ere sunset. There was nothing to do but accept this final blow of fate.

Weak, wearied to nothing, haggard for want of sleep, Ming Chu went to the helm and lashed it. She could not lower the sails; she cut them down, then made them fast. Off to the west was the long reef, smoking under the lash of long ground swells. She sank down, covered herself decently, and awaited death, as night and storm approached.

Death came, from the sea; the dreaded *baguio,* the black squall of the islands. The storm-devils tore at the laboring, shattered ship, already soggy with water in her hold. The twisting, agonized hulk snapped the lashings of the steering oar; a giant comber pooped her as she broached to, tons of water flooding aboard out of the darkness and driving her helpless toward the reefs once more. Weak thin screams shrilled on the blast. The decks were swept bare of dead and dying.

Ming Chu moaned weakly. If Yu the Tiger were here, there might still be some hope. Although she hated that wild adventurer with all her heart, he was strong in the will to live and in any crisis fierce and swift as the tiger for whom he was named. But Yu was gone, the Coast of Flowers was far away, death was close.

Another tremendous wave hissed over the doomed craft. Ming Chu was knocked to the deck, but, half-senseless, managed to wedge herself between a mooring bitt and the poop bulwarks. The tremendous cannonading of the surf on coral boomed even above the whining shriek of the wind; to leeward giant geysers of spume shot skyward, and then a scream burst from Ming Chu as the hulk dropped and dropped, only to heave up again on the great-grandfather of all combers. With a million wind-devils lending impetus, the hoary-crested wave picked up the hulk and hurled it.

The coral reefs plucked up with eager fingers, but the foaming white sea-horses lashed back, tore triumphantly over the barrier, and spent themselves hissing on a sandbar, a thousand yards to leeward. And with them, the hulk, dropping to pieces under the hammering, smashed into the sand, little more than a heap of wreckage.

So the night wore on, and the squall passed, and dawn came hot and white.

The sunlight wakened Ming Chu. She sat up, bleeding and battered, and stared

wildly around. Then she realized that she was stark naked, stripped clean by the sea. To any woman of her race, this was the depth of shame; she hastily crawled among the wreckage that strewed the whole lagoon shore, while the white sandfleas popped out of the coral sand in all directions. A torn strip of matting from a sail wrapped about her body, she made it fast with a cord, then took stock of things.

Here was the hulk, little more than a framework; the entire beach was a mere raffle of planks, spars, all sorts of litter. The big ship was actually fallen apart. Yet it had been built as well as the yellow people knew how, the planks fastened with crude bronze clamps and bolts, and tied in place with shrunken bamboos. Little these had availed against the stress of hammering waves, the strain of cargo. The brittle bronze had snapped or slipped, the split bamboo had burst. Well enough for rivers, even for coasting voyages, but not for the deep far sea.

Water! Ming Chu was afire with thirst. She searched the wreckage frantically but vainly. Burst casks and jars, hampers of rice and dried fish swept to nothing. Not a morsel of food, not a drop of fresh water. Everything of metal had gone into the bed of the lagoon. Something bulked under a pile of planks, and she tore them off in spasmodic hope, only to turn away listlessly when she disclosed her father's chest. She knew too well what was in that chest. The bow and the arrows her father prized so greatly, wrapped in waterproof coverings, and with them the images of her gods. Small use to her here, either weapons or gods!

The sun mounted higher over a fairly serene sea. The sky was cloudless and innocent as a baby's eyes; but the reef was hot, and the white coral sand, reflecting the blinding rays, radiated like a gridiron. Ming Chu felt the tortures of thirst.

SHE looked at the reef, the trees, the thickets; useless to search. If water were here, this place would be inhabited; but it was empty of life. She studied her father's chart. She had been here with him two years ago. Five leagues off to the southwest should be the Island of Spotted Snakes, while the Island of Giant Lizards lay due east, nearly as far. Out of sight from here. And the largest of all the islands, that of Renegades, was a bit farther; a place of fierce men, of large native towns, of gainful trade. But she had no boat. Yu the adventurer, the strong, burly master of his own destiny, had taken boat and water and chart —everything. Would have taken her too, had he not thought her down with the sickness of death.

Wearily, she turned and started toward the pandanus scrub that fringed the trees. At least, she must make the search; there was always a slim chance of finding water somewhere.

Half an hour later, on the other side of the reef, she stared dejectedly out at the vast expanse of jagged coral pools and rock, exposed at low tide far beyond the mother reef itself. No water. No living thing. No food.

"MING CHU! The Glorious Pearl —or her spirit!"

The words pierced her, brought her around. There, half emerged from the brush and staring at her, was the powerful figure of Yu, bronze sword in hand, his slant eyes drugged with sleep and dazed by sunlight.

"Yu!" Her thickened tongue almost refused duty. "Yu! Cowardly dog! Son of a turtle that you are. . . . Water! Water!"

The Tiger lowered his blade. "Alive! You are no spirit!" he muttered. "Water? I have none. I have nothing but the boat. It was on the shore; the water, the food, was all spoiled—"

Ming Chu slumped hopelessly, then gathered herself.

"We are both dead people and shall soon drink our fill from the Nine Springs of Eternity, so enmity is a foolish thing. You have the boat? Then we can still make the islands—"

A joyous blaring laugh broke from the Tiger. His bold eyes had kindled. Now he moved suddenly, and with a leap was beside her, grasping her arms.

"Aye, the islands, you and I!" he cried. "You're my woman now—"

She fought against him with an upsurge of vicious fury. Abruptly, his grasp loosened, he went lax, he stood staring past her. She turned. Silently, a shape of gleaming bronze had come upon them—Karlak, who stood poised, in his hand the knife that denoted his rank; the *balarao*, the throwing knife, with its balanced hilt of rough gold and shark-skin.

"Drop it!" cried Karlak, and the Tiger unclasped the sword he had whipped out. "Leave the woman alone, yellow devil;

she is mine. I am Karlak, *panjiran* of the Dusur people."

Snarling, yet aware of menace in the brush around, Yu stood motionless. Ming Chu stared at the bronze shape of Karlak.

"K'uei! Beneficent Dragon!" she croaked. "Water, water!"

"It is coming," said Karlak. He strode toward her, an arrow-straight figure of smooth muscle; then halted, touched forehead and heart, and smiled. From his bulging breech-clout of python-skin he pulled out a length of scarlet grass cloth. This was his own *bahag*, a combination sarong and covering against the night mist that no native went without.

He shook out the cloth and held it up, draped it about her shoulders, and she comprehended his wordless gesture. Then he turned.

"*Tubig!* Water for the woman and for this yellow devil."

Other men were around, but it was Icol the warrior who brought a joint of cane and unstoppered it, and held it to the lips of Ming Chu. She gripped at it, drank greedily but carefully, and lowered it again. Icol handed it to Yu the Tiger. Those two men exchanged a quick, comprehending look, and Yu drank.

Karlak had watched them with a frown; now he gave sharp, abrupt orders. The whole party started across the reef to where the ship had been wrecked. Explanations were simple. The lingua franca of all these islands was known to Yu and Ming Chu, as to all traders from the Flowery Land.

Heading for home, Karlak's craft had been caught by that sudden sharp blow, and he, nothing loath, ran before it, back for the reef. And this morning, with patience of hunters, they had tracked down Yu the Tiger and the golden woman as well. And Karlak knew he had to deal with Icol the warrior, over that woman. The men would take no sides in a private matter.

EVENING saw all hands in camp near the wreckage of the ship, which had been explored in vain for plunder. When Ming Chu claimed the chest, Karlak gave it to her unopened, whereat Icol scowled and spat oaths. If plunder lacked, bits of bronze and other useful things were plentiful. The big canoe was brought around into the lagoon, and so was the Tiger's small boat, with its oar and sail of matting. All this while, Yu had kept his head and held his peace; he was crafty, this adventurer. He had been places. He had dealt with such island men as these before now.

IN the westering sunlight, Karlak took Ming Chu to the beached framework of the ship. His tawny eyes reflected strange glints of fire as he bade her tell him how such a craft was made. Using the small boat to illustrate her point, she explained the split bamboo withes, the bronze clamps, the hewing of great planks from logs. Karlak and his people had soft iron, but no bronze, and any tools aboard the ship had been lost. But he could see, quickly enough, how futile had been such means of fastening a great ship together against the endless hammering thrust of the sea. And it was easy to comprehend the massive framework of this ship.

They talked of themselves, too; and later that night, when as now, the Malay folk loved to talk about the fires, while the surf pounded on the reef, Karlak heard of her father, of this unlucky voyage, of the Tiger. His heart kindled to the silken loveliness of her; and Glorious Pearl, looking upon this bronze god of the reef, felt the liver turn to water within her. She admitted the fact. Karlak, who had no understanding of the Chinese phrase thus translated, burst into laughter and took her to the tent he had erected near the wreck, from one of her own matting sails.

The *orang laut* stared after the two of them, red grins wreathing their faces. Icol also stared, gripping at the knife in his girdle, his broad, flat features atwist with rage. When he glanced at the yellow man, the prisoner, he met the bold, quick eyes of the Tiger fastened upon him. In that look, an unspoken question was asked and answered. Then Icol rose. His lean brown hand flicked the hilt of his *barong*, and a smile came to his lips, as though the touch of the knife had brought it.

Karlak came back alone. "The golden woman is mine," he said bluntly. "Everybody to sleep, for we have work tomorrow. Bind the yellow devil, and to sleep."

More work than he knew, or dreamed!

That night there was a new moon, a crescent moon, that glimmered for a while and dipped under the horizon. After its passing, the warrior Icol rose very quietly and loosed the bonds of the captive Tiger, and well away from the camp, they conferred together for a long

time, squatting in the sand and talking. They went side by side and looked at the great outrigger canoe, drawn up above high-water mark, still holding its huge load of fish plundered from the reef pools.

"It is too much for us," said Icol. "Take the small one. But first—"

They laughed softly, and from the fires Icol brought embers, which he laid under the canoe amidships, and put other wood on the embers.

"The woman is mine, remember," the Tiger said after a time, when they had made ready the small boat, putting water and food in it. "To you the *balarao*, the golden-hilted knife of the chief, but to me the woman. Later, when we sell her, we divide the price."

"Agreed," said Icol. "And all this gold of yours, we divide also."

NOW passed some little time. From the shelter of Ming Chu came slight sounds, a gasp, and silence. Under the stars, the Tiger came striding down to where the small boat lay, the woman's figure in his arms; she was bound and gagged. He set her in the sand, and laughed in her ear.

"Glorious Pearl, you are the Tiger's woman now!" he breathed exultantly. "These fools take the bronze fittings to be gold; this squat barbarian is tempted by it. and we go to people he knows. Perhaps we return here—who can tell? Be happy, Ming Chu, for you're the Tiger's bride. We'll put you aboard when he comes, with the golden knife of this chief he is killing—"

KARLAK wakened suddenly. There was an interval in the booming of the surf; in it, the sand crunched under naked heel. He looked up and saw a figure against the stars. In the same instant, he writhed aside, rolled over, clutched his throwing-knife as he came up—all one movement, the startled swiftness of a wild animal in his instinctive motion.

Icol missed the blow of his six-pound barong. The sharp soft iron blade went *whick* into the coral sand. Then Karlak, with a yell, was leaping at him. Icol turned and ran for it, glanced back, saw Karlak poised. Desperately, frantically, he leaped aside. The throwing-knife whistled where he had been. Next instant, he was plunging for the boat. And the Tiger, with a growl of sheer fury, had to give up his prey—it was choice between woman and life, and he took life.

Karlak stumbled over the bound figure, paused to cut it free, saw the small boat slithering out across the lagoon for the reef passage, her sail up and bulging. His men came running, yelling, spears streaking the night, but the boat was safely away. With one accord, they jumped for the big outrigger —and then stood stupefied, staring at the two parts of it. The craft had been eaten asunder by the fire. Even to patch it up was impossible.

The taunting laugh of Icol drifted from the water. "We'll be back, friends!" And the growl of Yu the Tiger added a curse to the prophecy.

Karlak, with the woman beside him and his men respectfully squatting before him, faced the dawn and the hard future. Icol's mother was of the Balinbing pirate folk; the two would go and bring those fierce slavers upon them, eager for Dusur blood. It would not be quickly done, but it would be done.

"We have food and water in plenty," said Karlak, once dismay was past. "Without a boat, we cannot get home; therefore, I shall provide a boat—such a boat as no man of the Dusur has ever seen! But I must talk with the gods."

That was logical. Karlak went alone into the darkness to seek speech with

the gods. He squatted beside the bulk of the wreck's framework. Ming Chu had told him what the Tiger had said, and how Icol took the bronze to be gold; well, so had the others. He himself half believed it to be gold, despite the woman's words.

This great ship of the yellow folk—if any man could build such a ship that would be seaworthy and strong, he would have the world at his feet! Karlak was no dim groping savage, but of a race that did things. The framework bulked above him in the starlight. It was heavy enough; it could be pegged, to make it stouter. But those planks—his brain went searching among the handicrafts of his people. No tools here. Plenty of cane on the reef, yes, rattan of all sorts.

He touched the matting sail-remnants. Queer woven stuff, this matting! Nothing like as strong and resilient as rattan—ah! By the gods! He leaped up in a blaze, then sank down again. It could be done, but there were no tools. How to bore holes? He stared up at the dawn-hints in the sky. A scrap of talk from the men drifted over to him.

"I still have the scars from the bites of those accursed *anay*. I saw some here on the reef, too—the little devils are everywhere."

The *anay!* Fantastic, yes; but better than boring holes with bits of the bronze. The planks would not be weakened. It might work, it might work! Karlak came to his feet again, his excitement whipping up. He stalked over to the fire.

"Men!" His voice blared at them, wakened the yellow woman from her doze. The firelight struck on him, brought out all his vivid eagerness. "The ship is here. We have the frame; with wooden pegs we can strengthen it, repair it. You have heard how the women of the Balinbings make the little boats those people use on the rivers? We shall make this great ship again in the same way. Use these planks and timbers. Cut down that queer poop—"

"We have none of this golden metal, we cannot work it," said a man.

"Fool! We need no metal. I have just told you. Stitch the ship together! Stitch it, from stem to stern and back again, with rattan. Out, and gather the green cane! And we need help from the *anay*—from those very ant-people you were just cursing. Out with the dawn, and hunt for them! Ants, plenty of them; bujuco and rattan, plenty of it! The ship's keel is unbroken, the timbers are good, but the wood is like iron."

Iron indeed, this wood—hard red teak, all of it, even the planks. Too hard for soft iron to pierce.

With the dawn, Karlak set his men to work, and Ming Chu flung herself into the task with him. She had seen many a ship built, but not in this strange fashion.

The planks were laid out in separate piles, sound and broken. By cutting down the lines of the ship, there were enough and to spare. Cordage and sails,

"Drop it!" cried Karlak, and the Tiger unclasped the sword he had whipped out.

everything was salvaged and drawn high, and the framework laid out above high water, and pegged stoutly.

THEN, watching as the holes were bored, Ming Chu shrieked with laughter. Many of the *anay*, those giant white boring ants, had been collected, and the *orang laut* knew how to handle them. A Malay would grasp an ant carefully, take a small shell in the other hand, and dropping the ant into the shell, clap it quickly on the plank.

The furious ant, turning from the hard shell, would bore through the teak wood. As it emerged triumphant on the other side, it would be caught and set to work again. Ming Chu insisted on trying this novel tool, and was so severely bitten that she writhed in agony on the hot sand—and tried no more.

The outer timbers were seized to the framework, most of the stringers and strakes being sound enough; the ship had been hammered apart rather than smashed. The tough bujuco, stripped of its poisonous thorns, and rattan soaked in water until pliable, did the work.

And, as the ship grew, with everyone toiling from dawn to dark and after, the Dusur chief and the Glorious Pearl drew closer, though there was no time for love. To the woman, he was a never-ending amazement, totally unlike her own people as he was. Karlak had no lucky or unlucky days, but his ingenuity met and conquered each problem that arose. To Karlak, this golden creature was woman, yes, and she set his spirit in a flame; but for the present he treated her exactly as one of his own men, though he talked often with her.

And all this while she kept the chest that had been her father's, prayed sometimes to the gold and vermilion gods, and said nothing of the weapons therein.

THE ship grew, to the amazement of those men, grew until the shapely hull was all complete. There were no coconuts here on the mother reef, but their sail and mats were of coconut fiber; this they worked into tow for caulking, and used tree-resin with powdered shell for the outer caulking. Once back at home, this could be greatly bettered with beeswax and other products, but all they cared about now was getting home.

Then came the great day when they rolled the ship down into the water and saw her afloat. Save for needed repairs, the steering-oars of the original craft had come through well enough, the spars and sails and cordage were worked over. They were at work in the dawn, stepping the masts, when one of the men who had been up among the trees came tearing down with wild yells.

"Balinbing! The slave-hunters!"

He dashed in among them with report. Two giant proas or war canoes were in sight, far northward, but evidently working down along the reefs. Karlak cursed under his breath.

"So Icol has brought the pirate folk down on us, eh? Look alive, men!" he shouted. "They're searching the lagoons. They'll not get here before mid-afternoon, if then. Off and out of here before they come! Stake everything on our ship!"

For the two masts, the original sails had been worked over—no job to boast about, true; but these dozen men were working only for the short voyage home. Once there, Karlak knew that he could refashion this ship to his heart's desire.

Once there? That was the terror of it. The men muttered as they worked. Old Talut, chief paddler, shook his head gravely. Karlak flew at the business in hand with furious energy, but Ming Chu read his face aright.

"What is it?" she asked. "What is so wrong?"

"Us!" Karlak laughed bitterly. He swept a hand toward the pitifully few weapons piled on the sand, spears and knives. "Can we hope to fight those warriors, a dozen of us? No. The only chance lies in the size of our ship."

"And the way it handles," said she. "I know it, Beneficent Dragon; I can handle it. Let me have the steering-oar, with one man to help. You give the orders."

He nodded, and went back to work.

Already her chest was aboard, with her gods and the bundle beside them. The ship's original decking, though sadly in need of repair, was good enough for their purpose. With the masts stepped, the rigging and sails in place, all was ready a little past noon. But the man sent to watch from the trees brought in bad news. The two giant proas, outrigger craft, were close.

"Let's go!" ordered Karlak. "I'll look to the sails—you to the helm, Ming Chu!"

The passage through the reef was easy to see, with the sun overhead and behind. There was a steady wind; as the sails bellied out and the ship moved, Karlak uttered a wild cry of exultant joy, and his men echoed it. A screaming snarl broke from Talut, in the bows. He pointed; and, as the reef opened up and they stood out, the two proas appeared, racing down. One glance told Karlak that they had the legs of him.

"All hands, for quick work!" blared his voice. "Hard alee, there! Quick with it, woman!"

Ming Chu and the man with her put the helm hard over. The ship swung into the wind, hung for an instant with her sails booming, then filled smartly away on the larboard tack. One huge proa, not unlike the *vinta* of later days, with a great spread of sail, and another canoe, smaller, but crowded with men, under paddles alone. Karlak sized up matters swiftly, and swung toward Ming Chu.

"Head for the smaller one—smash her!" he shouted.

SHE waved her hand in assent. A tangle of cordage, as something gave way; Karlak leaped to help with the work. All well again, and the ship hold-

ing true. A thrill went through Karlak at the feel of her, at her resilient response, though without ballast she rode high and light. What he would do with this ship, if he lived!

They were two hundred yards from the paddled proa, drawing closer with each moment. The larger craft was behind them, tearing down at racing speed, conch-shells blowing and men yelling. Closer and closer now—a yell from Karlak, and the helm was swung, as the sheets were eased off. The ship wore sharply and plunged at the proa.

The stroke missed. Those paddlers knew their business. They avoided that sweeping death by a yard, and sent a hail of arrows aboard the ship—then they were astern and out of it, with the larger craft charging down past them, overhauling the ship at a rapid clip.

KARLAK looked at this craft—its huge spread of sail, its enormous outrigger sweeping the combers, its crowd of men; and he knew himself lost. He could not run, he had not men enough to fight. She was coming up fast, men were standing ready with lines and grapnels. Talut touched his arm and spoke grimly.

"Look! At her steering-oars."

Karlak nodded. Icol was there, and behind him the Tiger, Yu, and one of the Balinbing chieftains. A line was thrown, and another. Arrows hailed in upon the doomed men of the Dusur tribe. Three of them were down, others were wounded. The two craft were side by side, the lines were fast—

Karlak leaped to cut the lines, hacked one free. Already half a dozen men were clambering aboard; his own men met them hand to hand. Another line aft—he darted to it, and severed it. Then he heard the twang of a bowstring, and looked up.

Ming Chu stood there, a great curving bow in her hand, a long shaft notched; the string twanged again. A frightful yell burst from Icol as the shaft went through him. The Balinbing chieftain was down. Ming Chu loosed the twanging string once more, and the Tiger, Yu himself, that bold adventurer, plunged forward among the pirates and was lost to sight.

And, the last line parted, the huge proa sheered away wildly, amid yells of dismay from her crew, while aboard the ship the few boarders were met with spear and knife. Karlak found himself with six men left alive, and the ship clear. He leaped to the side of Ming Chu; she was shouting at him:

"Look! With that outrigger, she's helpless if we take her to leeward—"

"For the love of the gods!" cried Karlak, laughing excitedly. "Haven't you done enough, woman? No! Let her go. We've only half a dozen men left—we've beaten them off, we've whipped them, your shafts have killed their leaders—enough for this time, my woman! Enough, until next time comes!"

Her eyes widened upon him. The bow fell from her hands; she caught at him suddenly, touched the long arrow that was through his thigh.

"Oh! Beneficent Dragon—you're hurt, you're wounded—"

Old Talut, bloody but still sound, came darting to take over the helm, and grinned widely, as the ship ran up the dark waves toward home, and the enemy fell behind.

"Next time!" he grunted. "Aye! And next time we'll take toll of those devils!"

Next time indeed, and for many a year to come, and across the purple seas to Borneo and Celebes, on to the far mountains of Asia—the sturdy resilient ships of the islanders took toll for many a century and more.

AS we sat there by the dying fire, Karlak told me how this toll was taken, of yellow man, Dyak, white man. Then his head lowered, and through the shuddering booming of the surf his voice was all but hushed.

"And now the old days are gone," he said. "And we of these islands are no longer Americans; we have our own government, our own republic—*hai!* By Allah, we shall see about that! There is nothing but trouble and fear and war to seek from the future. The old days are best. The old days are ever the best—"

Myers, of the Constabulary, looked at me, and wrinkled up his nose in a grimace.

"Anyhow," he said awkwardly, "that's one hell of a good yarn of the old days, Karlak, and the first stitched ship! Was that chap your ancestor?"

Karlak lifted his head. "My name speaks," he said with dignity; and we had our answer.

The next colorful story of Ships and Men takes us to the waters of the Nile and the strange craft that built the Pyramids.

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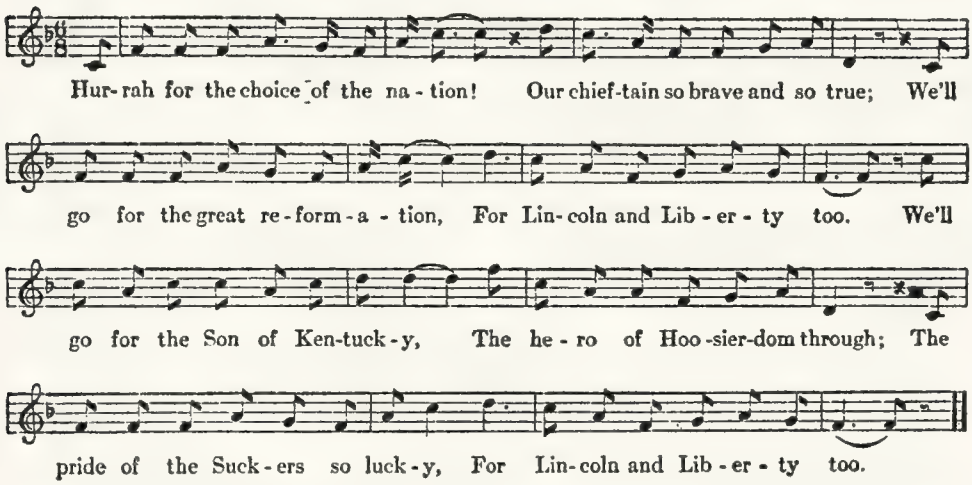
Guaranteed Antiques of Song and Story

Lincoln and Liberty

This campaign ditty of 1860 has the brag and extravaganza of electioneering. The tune is from "Old Rosin the Bow" and served earlier for a Henry Clay candidacy in which was the salutation:

So, freemen, come on to the rally;
This motto emblazons your crest:
That lone star of Hope yet is shining;
It lightens the skies in the West.

Hark! freedom peals far in her thunder.
Her lightning no force can arrest.
She drives the foul army asunder.
"Hail, gallant old Hal of the West!"



In a later year when Horace Greeley was running for the Presidency against Gen. U. S. Grant, voters were reminded, "Then let Greeley go to the dickens, too soon he has counted his chickens."

1

Hurrah for the choice of the nation!
Our chieftain so brave and so true;
We'll go for the great reformation,
For Lincoln and Liberty too.
We'll go for the Son of Kentucky,
The hero of Hoosierdom through;
The pride of the Suckers so lucky,
For Lincoln and Liberty too.

2

They'll find what by felling and mauling,
Our rail-maker statesman can do;
For the people are everywhere calling
For Lincoln and Liberty too.
Then up with our banner so glorious,
The star-spangled red, white and blue,
We'll fight till our banner is victorious,
For Lincoln and Liberty too.

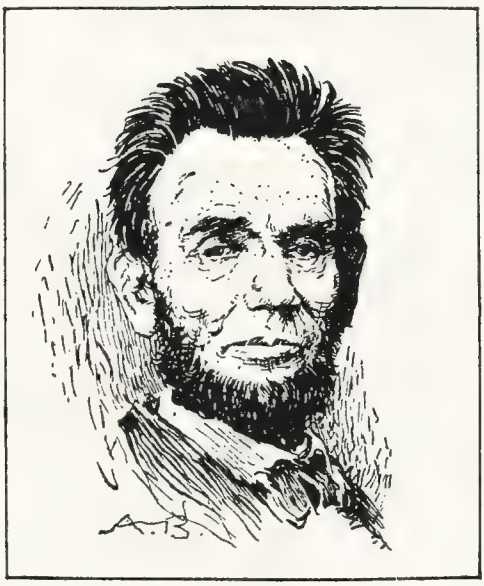
Several hundred of our pioneer songs have been gathered by Carl Sandburg and published in book form by Harcourt, Brace & Company under the title "The American Songbag."

Edited by **CARL SANDBURG**

Author of "Abraham Lincoln," "Smoke and Steel," "The People, Yes!" etc.

Old Abe Lincoln Came Out of the Wilderness

Torchlight processions of Republicans sang this in the summer and fall months of 1860. The young Wide Awakes burbled it as the kerosene dripped on their blue oilcloth capes. Quartets and octettes jubilated with it in packed, smoky halls where audiences waited for speakers of the evening. In Springfield, Illinois, the Tall Man who was a candidate for the Presidency of the nation, heard his two boys Tad and Willie sing it at him. The tune is from negro spirituals, "When I Come Out de Wilderness" and "Ol' Gray Mare Come Tearin' Out de Wilderness."



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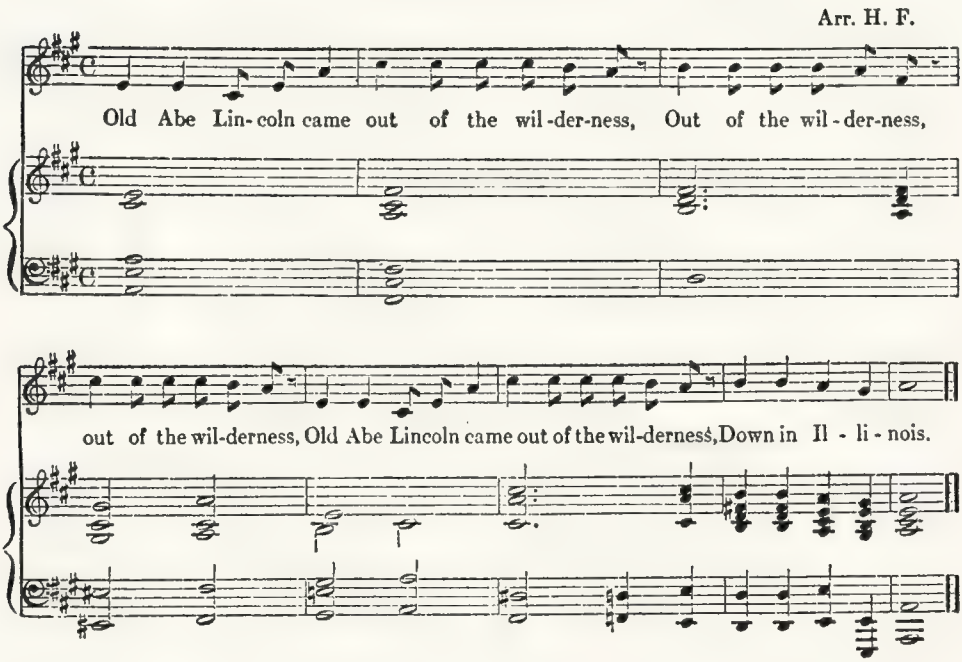

Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness,
Out of the wilderness, out of the wilderness.
Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness,
Down in Illinois.

LIFE'S A

Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon

The Story Thus Far:

THE future of all Western America hung in the balance. In the Northwest the great Hudson's Bay Company was pressing on with new outposts. In the Southwest a great gathering of the Indian tribes threatened an alliance and a savage war that would drive the few white trappers back to the Mississippi.

Not easily driven were these white trappers, however.... Kit Carson, one of their leaders, left Bent's Fort one night, and on the invitation of the Hudson's Bay man Shunan, attended a great Indian council at their camp near by. (Kit had saved Shunan's beautiful half-breed daughter Marie, known as Go Everywhere Woman, from a fight at a fandango in Santa Fé, and she had been greatly taken with him.) At the council Kit learned that the Indians only awaited a curious "medicine-sign"—the appearance of a white beaver—to begin their uprising.

With his partners, Rube Herring and Laforay, Kit spent the rest of the season trapping; and one morning, to his intense surprise, he found a white beaver—an albino, presumably—in his trap. He skinned the animal and hid the pelt in the middle of his bale; but shortly thereafter the Blackfeet raided the camp and stole the fur-bales. After a swift pursuit his partners' bales were recovered, but Kit's—the white pelt within it—was carried off. And the fate of an empire hung on that strange "medicine" token.

At the animal-trappers' rendezvous on the Green River, Carson interviewed the Hudson's Bay chief; and he,—Captain McKay,—seeking to win Carson to the Company's forces, used his influence to get Kit's stolen furs for him. And only after the bale had been delivered to Kit, unopened, did the Indians learn that it contained the sacred white skin. . . . At about this time Shunan sought to run off with Singing Bird, an Indian girl in whom Carson was interested; and in the fight which followed, both were wounded. . . . And it was none other than the famous missionary explorer Dr. Marcus Whitman who dressed Kit's wound.

Recovering, Carson set out with his comrades for the beaver grounds again, taking the coveted white pelt with him. A short time afterward, however, he was captured by the pitiless Blackfeet. As he lay bound in a lodge, his young comrade Stephens was also brought in captive.

The Blackfeet sent Stephens to the trappers' camp with an offer to trade the captive Carson for the coveted white beaver pelt; otherwise Carson would die at the stake. At the last moment Bridger and other trappers appeared with the white fur; the exchange was made and Carson released. Only as the trappers whirled their horses and rode hard for their fortified winter camp did the Blackfeet discover they had been tricked by an ordinary pelt whitened with lime dust.

The Indians attacked the camp and were beaten off—sought to burn the trappers out and were defeated again. But though the Blackfeet now disappeared, Carson and Bridger knew they would soon strike again. *(The story continues in detail:)*

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A great chapter in the winning of the West.

FIGHT, KIT!

By GORDON KEYNE

MORE weeks had passed; weeks of blizzard, of frozen snowy loneliness, of work, of winter. Indeed, winter was of short remaining life.

The winter camp sat securely upon the bottoms along the right bank of the Yellowstone, an acre-square huddle of smoking lodges and huts defended by breastwork of logs and poles. Across the frozen river extended the snowy plains, almost level until interrupted by gravel hills and clay badlands.

In the camp bend of the river a curving bluff shut off the coldest wind. Upstream, above the camp, the groves of sweet cottonwood were source of fuel, meat and fodder. Buffalo and elk ranged there, for shelter and the scanty croppings of underbrush and coarse grass. It was simple to pack inboughs and bark to the pole horse-pen for the greedy animals.

And all winter, as yet, no sign of marauding Blackfeet. The medicine skin in the log storehouse which held packs and supplies might have been as safe if hung to a tree in the woods. The lookout daily posted in a shelter hut on the bluff had cursed the monotonous, useless duty.

"Looks as though the varmints aint so keen on getting the medicine skin after all," Bridger declared one day. "Come trap season, we'll take it to them."

"No," said Laforay. "There'll be the red sky."

"Plenty red skies already. Morning—evening; free choice."

"Not that kind. A sky all blood, in the night. I see it, same as their medicine man. I see heap Blackfeet marching through the sky, Jim. And last night I see an eagle flying off with the pelt in his claws. The Blackfeet make ready for one big try; they wait for the medicine to say when."

The swart wrinkled face of Laforay, as he sat in the lodge, was sweating with earnestness. Bridger retorted with his wonted soundless chuckle.

"If you'd et a few more pounds buff'ler meat you'd ha' dreamed of that pelt turned back to beaver and setting on your stomach." He picked up his rifle and rose. "I'm off to see 'bout Reynolds. Allowed he's feeling poorly."

Bridger went out. Laforay glanced at Carson, intently.

"I feel a big fight, Kit, for sure. Plenty dead. Not you, not me, not Rube, but others. Some of us, I guess; plenty Blackfeet. I see smoke, a trail where women cry with their hair down, same as Stephens' mother. Something tell me I feel better when I have the hair of Shunan's daughter and you have Plenty Eagle's hair."

"I aim to have that—and the 'Rapahoe girl to boot," Carson said slowly. "I'll do it, sure as beaver comes to baited trap."

"We have early spring,"—and Laforay nodded sagely. "Already long winter. Yesterday I see where bear poke himself out of hole on south side of hill, bust open rotten log and eat grubs, then go back for more sleep. He hungry. He know. Next time, he stay out."

Presently Bridger came in again, his seamed features dark.

"I've put Reynolds in the hide leanto

off'n the stores, where the fleshing-block is. 'Pears to me he's coming down with the measles."

Carson glanced up. "What? How'd he get 'em?"

Bridger squatted. "There was an old Injun camp place back in the woods, and a Sioux carcass up in a tree. I told him it was bad medicine to meddle with, but he thought he seen a good blanket, and clumb up and got it. Found it was rat-gnawed and threw it away. Like as not, ketched the measles off'n it. He can stay in that leanto until he's well. I'll tend on him."

"Bad medicine, sure, to bother grave," said Laforay. "You watch out, Jim. Maybe you get sick like Reynolds."

"Nope. Had the measles, worst kind, when I was a pup. I'll keep his fire going and pass in his soup. . . . Hark!" Bridger started up. "What's doing?"

The signal gun of the lookout had sounded, and men were breaking into shouts. Carson, Bridger and Laforay ran out of the lodge. The lookout was calling and pointing upriver. In a moment, everyone could see the cause—a single horseman, riding hard.

Rounding into the wooded bend, the rider came on, like a courier, bearing full tilt down the snowy ice of the Yellowstone as though the devil lashed his animal's rump: A large man, constantly glancing over his shoulder.

"Hell-bent from the Blackfeet—with his guts cold!" rasped Rube Herring.

"White man! By damn, the big Frenchie!" cried Laforay.

Shunan indeed, as flying red hair and beard testified. He swerved in for the camp, and in front of the camp entrance hauled his sweated mount short. Chilling eyes met him—astonished, hostile.

"Non! You must not shoot," burst forth Shunan. "I have something to say—"

"How, Bridger! I come as friend," he said hastily, and saw Carson. "How, Kit! We have talk. My heart is good. I claim sanctuary, refuge!"

Carson felt curious eyes glancing at him, but had no words. Bridger growled.

"Out with your yarn and then get out yourself."

"Non! Non!" bleated Shunan. "I make appeal, you cannot refuse. I put up my hoss. By gar, I not get out! You'll understand when we talk."

"Going to kill him, Kit?" said Herring.

"Depends on Bridger. I'd sure like to. Thought he was wolf-meat long ago!" And Carson's blue eyes rested icily on that flaming countenance.

"Leave your hoss; we'll talk in my lodge," said Bridger ungraciously. "That is, if there's air enough with you there. You stink of Blackfeet. Come on, Kit. Sit in council."

Shunan swung off. They walked to Bridger's lodge, entered, and sat down; outside, the camp was in a murmur. Bridger's squaw tossed dry cottonwood on the fire and scuttled away.

"We pass the pipe and sit like friends?" said Shunan.

"Nope. The pipe is cold," Bridger rapped out. "If you got a talk to warm it, ears are open. Else go back, fast as you come."

"I can't go back. I come from the Blackfeet. I come fast because arrows are faster. By gar, there is death in the woods! You see me take to the river," —and Shunan shivered, as he gripped the fusil across his lap. "I struck Plenty Eagle in the face; some day I take his scalp. Now I claim refuge here. *Hein?* From what? I'm not sure what. But I'm safe here. When you march, Shunan will help you fight Plenty Eagle."

"Relative of your'n, aint he?" Bridger said dryly. "You've sat in his lodge. Your talk's no good. Your tongue is forked, Shunan." And he spat. "Get out."

"Non! I stay."

"Why didn't you stay at Fort Hall?" snapped Carson, tight-lipped. "Or didn't you go there?"

"*Mais oui,* I went there. Three time I mos' get rubbed out, one time by bullet, two time by arrow. I think maybe Plenty Eagle send somebody for kill me, so I never come back for the leetle squaw. So I go back by short trail to get that 'Rapahoe squaw. Plenty Eagle, he laugh at me. He keep her himself. He say his sister wife enough for me. So I see my daughter."

WHILE listening to the rapid burst of words, Carson sniffed the air. His blue eyes lit up. Then Shunan was talking again, swiftly, earnestly.

"She tell me Plenty Eagle act according as his medicine say. He is great man, greater than Hudson's Bay man; the 'Rapahoe girl will make him strong. I stay there, but every time I go out for hunt, my hair feel loose. Two time, arrows fly with song of death. By gar, I get mad. I tell Plenty Eagle he's be one bad-heart liar, and hit him. He would kill a Hudson's Bay man? Not Shunan! I ride away, to offer myself to Americans as good friend. Las' night in the woods, an arrow from the dark through my blanket, by gar! I change camp, I sit up outside the fire. At daylight I hear a leetle snap, I jump for my hoss. An arrow whistle through my hair. I ride like hell from the next bow-twang. I ask refuge from the head chief here, you, M'sieu Bridger. I stay where those Blackfeet will not come on me like wolf in snow. I will march with you as brother."

"Like hell," said Bridger disgustedly. "A tall yarn. Don't believe a word of it, Shunan. What you come for, huh?"

Carson, his eyes alight, rose and slipped out. When he came back, Shunan was talking excitedly, passionately.

"I not know nothing about medicine skin. Let Plenty Eagle find it, *hein?* His medicine tell him to wait. The medicine wait for him on the Yellowstone, for a red sky that has drunk up the snow. M'sieu, I show you my heart. My tongue is straight."

Carson whipped his hand from behind him and held out the fox-fur cap. He threw a glance down at the broad moccasins.

"Your cap, Shunan. And your tracks in the snow, back by that island winter camp. It was you who shot at me that day—"

He checked himself abruptly. His thoughts went back to those other tracks in the snow, which Laforay had declared to be Arapahoe. He caught his breath, his eyes widened. But Shunan was panting out hot words, eager excuses.

"She's be my cap, sure. Why? I tell you. I shoot at you, put no bullet on top the powder. A warrior see me, get angry, we fight. I lose my cap, yes. I run with everybody, and I go back and have trouble with Plenty Eagle."

"Hell! A pack of lies." Carson threw down the cap. "The bonnet's like your talk, Shunan. Lousy."

"Listen! I am white man, same as you," Shunan made desperate appeal to Bridger. "You put me out, what happen? Plenty Eagle smoke my scalp. My ghost follow you. I'm be dead, but no matter. My ghost follow you all the same; my spirit say to you: 'One white man let another white man be killed!'"

Carson sniffed. But Jim Bridger shifted about uneasily, rubbed his jaw, meditated. At length he voiced decision.

"Mebbe true, mebbe not. You can stay. Keep to camp and you keep your hair. Try any tricks, you lose it. Dunno but what I'd rather have you under my eye than ranging loose on fetch and call between the Hudson's Bay and the Blackfeet."

Shunan's hazel eyes, bloodshot from snow and wind, darted to Carson; but Carson made no comment. With a shrug, Shunan turned to Bridger.

"You give me sanctuary. *Bon!* Let us smoke it."

BRIDGER called for a pipe. His squaw ducked in and found the pipe, with long reed stem and green stone bowl. She filled it with kinnikinnick, the mixture of tobacco and red willow, and laid a coal to it. Bridger took it, puffed a gulp of smoke from mouth and nose, and passed the pipe to Shunan. The latter puffed and extended the pipe to Carson. But Carson refused it.

"It is poison."

"No matter." Shunan was slyly jubilant. "The chief and I have smoked."

"You can see to your animal," Bridger said, and stood up. "There'll be quarters for you somewhere, long as you keep to camp."

"*Sacre nom!*" Shunan shook his huge head ruefully. "I will not be caught again in the woods. I don't fight what I not see."

Carson spoke deliberately. "I can't touch you in camp. But the first minute I find you outside, I'll kill you."

"*Non, non;* in camp we shall be friends." And Shunan gave him a malevolent grin. "When we march together to strike the Blackfeet, you shall have Plenty Eagle's scalp and I'll take the leetle squaw. *Hein?*"

Astounded at the man's insolence, Carson kept himself in hand.

"You'll never get that 'Rapahoe girl to woman you," he said with contempt.

"I choose not to hear big talk,"—and Shunan laughed. "Some one tell me the 'Rapahoe are mad with us both. Good! You are good leetle man, but I am Shunan, of Hudson's Bay. I give her father those twenty hosses, *hein?* I give you Plenty Eagle's scalp to buy her sister with, maybe."

CARSON rose, and Shunan. They went outside, all three, and paused. Shunan spoke, as by careless thought.

"You have the medicine skin safe, Bridger?"

"Sartin, sartin," said Bridger, and jerked his head. "In that storehouse over there, safe from varmints. Door has no lock. The bar is lead,"—and he tapped his rifle.

"What's that smoke in the leanto?" Shunan asked. Carson was trying vainly to catch Bridger's eye and warn him to check his tongue.

"A sick man. Keep away from there or you'll catch the itch."

"Bah! I am not afraid," said Shunan. "I am good nurse, me. I will tend him to show my good heart. You have brimstone? Or powder will do."

"Not by a damn' sight," Bridger warned. "You keep clear of storehouse and leanto, or you'll get an itch it'll take hell's brimstun to cure! That there is medicine ground. Fust man ketches you violating medicine will flash a ball through you. While you're here,"—and Bridger's stubble and fringe of whiskers twitched with a flitting smile,—"Carson will look after you."

"*Bon!* Understood!" exclaimed Shunan. "Kit and I will sleep under one blanket."

He strode away to look after his horse. Carson turned hotly to Jim Bridger.

"I'll not share the same lodge with that dog!"

"That talk don't shine,"—and Bridger chuckled. "You're elected, 'cause I know you won't sleep at all. Or else, he'll have that 'Rapahoe gal 'fore you can get to her."

Carson frowned. "Jim, what are you up to? What d'you mean?"

"Hell! Aint you up to trap? I told him his tongue was forked. It's all plain as fresh beaver sign: Let him get that medicine pelt in his hands and pass it to Plenty Eagle, and the gal is his. That's the bargain, you bet."

"I don't read your float-stick. You told him where the pelt is kept."

"Pshaw!" Bridger's tone was impatient, but his lean leathery countenance twitched again with sly good humor. "I opened the road to him, sure. He come here with a pack o' lies about death on his trail. Now we'll know where to be looking. If he wants the medicine, he'll go after it. Your job, Kit! Keep your rifle primed."

And chuckling anew, shrewd old Bridger went about his business.

The day passed; the night; another day. Shunan idled about the camp and boasted with thinly veiled insolence. He slyly taunted Carson, secure of his ground now that Bridger had smoked and made the camp safe for him. Carson watched him and slept ill, ridden by fear lest he lose a chance to put a bullet into the vaunter. Meantime, Reynolds grew no better, but worse. Measles, said Bridger, and took all care of the sick man himself.

A prime buffalo hunt that day, with meat piled high and the feast unending. Pots simmered with blood and marrow, spitted strips of fat hump had sizzled over the coals, sausages of spiraled guts well stuffed had browned crisp and juicy. The camp gorged late, gorged to repletion; all hands turned in to sleep like holed bears. No guards were out; there was no thought of peril. The Blackfeet camps were long marches away, Shunan had declared; besides, the medicine sign was a red sky over bared earth, while now all the world was whitely frozen.

DOZING, Carson stirred, slept again, roused. He was conscious of Laforay's snores, of Herring's nosy blasts, of Shunan's puffy drone awhistle through his beard. Each man had his note.

Again Carson stirred. Daybreak? No; it was the paler gray of full morning, now mustering for the sunrise! The lodge was draped in heavy silence. Men slept exhausted, blanketed in the last-hour sleep which would postpone the day. Carson's attention quickened. He sat

Herring was down; a figure was charging in like a cougar. Plenty Eagle—his hatchet up for the *coup!*

up, stared. For him, the lodge was empty; Shunan had gone.

A leap, and Carson was up, reaching for hunting-shirt and moccasins. He seized rifle and "fixings" and slid outside, avid for the chance. Should Shunan take one step outside the bounds, Carson would be free to put lead into him—but not until then.

The entire camp was inert, grossly slumbering. Ah! There was the shaggy bulk, at the entrance of the leanto, just emerging! Gone to see the sick man? Not likely. Carson's heart leaped. The connecting door from leanto into the storehouse, the white beaver pelt! Shunan had been after that medicine skin, had stolen it—

Sudden and swift, Shunan burst from the leanto like a buffalo bull with tail up. He plied legs and moccasins for the horse-pen, running like a madman with long bounds. He jumped the top rail. The pen was a confusion of rearing, snorting animals suddenly startled. Shunan emerged from the welter, already astride. Even as Carson broke into a run, he vaulted the rail and was away, hammering with his heels, and next instant his horse rose to the breastwork barrier.

Carson calculated as he ran. Perchance waste his shot at that mark, with no time to reload? No; better make sure. Must make sure! Shunan had stolen the pelt and was off with it. No miss, no failure, else the mountains and the plains were red with blood!

Once in the pen, Carson nabbed the best horse to hand, vaulted astride, was over the rail and after. Through the hiss of air in his ears he heard the blether of the alarmed and wakening camp. His mount took the barricade and landed in the very tracks of Shunan's mount. The course lay straight, across the snow of the icy river and on into the plain and the low hills and brush-dark valleys, with the badlands beyond.

Shunan, two rifle-shots in the lead, looked to the rear, bent forward, lifted his horse into full speed with his heels drumming. In the cold gray morning, his objective was clear. The first badlands offered him sure refuge, one of the puzzling clay arroyos or deep and crooked washes, where a fugitive could twist and turn like a cunning rabbit. And on far beyond, in the better country ahead, the Blackfeet.

IF the race were to the swift, Shunan had no chance. Carson rode upon thudding hoofs. The breeze lashed his eyes, set them watering, set him cursing for fear of blurred sights when the time came; but his horse had better legs than the other. The interval between rabbit and hound was slowly lessening. Shunan bulked larger. By his motions, he was renewing the priming of his fusil.

The first spring was run, the miles flowed behind, and now it was a matter of bottom no less than of speed. Twice Carson was tempted, once he lifted rifle butt to shoulder; but a shot at a gallop was uncertain, the range was long. He must make certain, bring the rascal to a stand, and kill him.

Across the plain now, at the low hills, the end in sight. Desperate, frantic, Shunan sent his horse plunging at an opening draw. Carson could hear the spatter of the snowy gravel as he tore after. Up the winding draw, he had glimpse of man and horse. He cocked his rifle.

The draw narrowed. Any instant, now! Another curve. Carson rounded it, and saw how the draw ended in a high cut bank. Shunan's horse was slipping and floundering on the steep slope to the right. The animal came to its knees.

Shunan turned, and his fusil came up. Carson jerked his mount about and through the smoke-gush of his own discharge, saw the fusil vomit forth. The ball whistled past him; then Shunan was squirming in the snow, his fusil sticking out of a drift, his horse wildly scrambling away. The two reports, almost merging, volleyed in dull echoes.

Carson reloaded; the job must be finished. Shunan staggered up, then sank down again, clinging to the reins, one hand pressed to reddening left shoulder. Carson drew in, rifle ready.

"*Non!* You must not shoot," burst forth Shunan, eyes desperate. "One moment! I give you the 'Rapahoe squaw! I have something to say—"

"Say it to the wolves. I'm taking the medicine pelt back to camp." Carson brought up his rifle, clapped priming into pan, cocked the piece, and slipped to the ground. His intent was plain. Shunan's blanched face was terrible to see.

"*Non!* You shall hear me! I have something to tell, for you to tell Bridger, tell all! Kill me, and you not know till too late," cried Shunan in a frenzy. "I don't touch the pelt, I tell you! My breast is bare to your bullet, I cannot fight. Listen to me—"

Carson's gaze was blue ice. "All right. I'll take you back to Bridger, if you say the word. You know what that'll mean—"

"I will not go!" screamed Shunan. "It is one camp of death! You shall hear what I have to say. Why did I run like hell? That is one pelt of death to you all in camp! Damn you, shoot—I defy you! All are dead man, you and the rest! My ghost will laugh—"

The man was in frightful earnest. Carson, despite himself, hesitated and wondered.

Then the eyes of Shunan widened, fixed and staring. His jaw fell, his mouth hung open with no word issuing. There was a sharp hiss, a dull twang—"*spatt!*" The arrow singing past Carson's ear had sunk to its feathers in Shunan's breast. It drove the air from the lungs in a choking gasp, drove the body backward.

CARSON had only half turned to the twang and the exultant whoop, when a figure came bounding down the slope. Recognition snapped through him. It was the young Arapahoe brave, the lover of Singing Bird. Carson remembered everything—those mysterious tracks in the snow, the arrows Shunan had blamed on

lurking Blackfeet. All the while, Brave Elk had been on the vengeance trail.

Charging onto the dead man, Brave Elk struck the staring face with his bow. *"Coup!"* He bent over, slashed with his knife, stood erect with the red scalp in his hand, and held it high; his yell echoed through the draw.

"It is mine!" he shouted challenge at Carson. "You wounded him, but I killed him. I reached him first; I counted *coup.*"

"We won't quarrel over the hair," Carson said grimly. "But I claim what's under his shirt. I take that, you take the rest. Or else—" And his rifle moved slightly.

BRAVE ELK laughed jubilantly, the trophy thus assured him. In his exultation, enmity for Carson was swept away.

"You can have what is under his shirt. The rest is mine."

The Elk stooped, parted the folds of Shunan's shirt, and explored. He straightened up and kicked the dead thing in contempt.

"Only a dirty skin. You are welcome to it."

Carson stared, incredulous. . . . It was true. No white beaver pelt—nothing! Then, what did Shunan's mad flight mean? What had his words about death meant?

Brave Elk stripped away powder-horn and pouch and beaded belt and weapons, left the jutting arrow as his sign, and darted back to retrieve the fusil. He cast a look at the horse, which had come to a halt in the draw below, and spoke.

"Now I have killed him. I have been a long time trying."

True. The Elk was gaunt and weathered and worn, his buckskin patched and tattered. He leaned on Shunan's fusil, as though suddenly very weary.

"I have been a wolf living in holes. The red dog hid on the Snake. My medicine was bad. I followed him to the Blackfeet lodges and watched for him; my medicine was bad again. I almost killed him in the woods on the Yellowstone. He was afraid. He ran away to you, to the Americans. I watched the plains in front of the fort, but he did not come out into the woods. My eyes were bright with hate. This morning, I saw him chased across under the open sky. I ran hard to be first. The shots brought me here. Now I am a man again. I will go to Sights the Enemy with what I have taken, and ask him for Singing Bird."

Carson started.

"Singing Bird! Then she is back home again?"

"I do not know," said Brave Elk. "I did not go into Plenty Eagle's village when I watched for Sun Buffalo. The hearts of the Arapahoe are bad toward the Blackfeet. The Arapahoe will not talk with him until he returns Singing Bird. They will listen only to the great medicine, the sign from the Great Spirit. Why did you ask me to look under the shirt of this dead dog?"

"Because we have the great medicine; I trapped it myself," Carson said. "I thought Shunan had stolen it and was running to the Blackfeet."

Brave Elk regarded him frowningly, curiously, and shook his head.

"No; what you have is not the medicine, Little Chief. The medicine is not in this country. The White Beaver Medicine crosses the mountains from the sunrise side, when the grass is green and the buffalo calves."

"Why do you say that, Brave Elk?"

"It is what the Flatheads say, what the Nez Percés say. They look for the White Beaver to come through the mountains by that pass you call South Pass. It is the true strong medicine for the side that keeps it. That is the sign. The medicine you have is false."

Carson, anxious to keep the young warrior in talk, spoke with subtle flattery.

"Brave Elk is very cunning. He has counted a great *coup.* The scalp of Sun Buffalo will be a trophy for his children to admire. He has watched well; he will have a new name, Keen Watcher, He Sees Afar. The Blackfeet will talk of how he killed Sun Buffalo in their country."

The haggard young brave glowed with pride.

"Little Chief had better go home. The Blackfeet are coming like leaves rolling in the wind of autumn."

"No. They are far from here."

"Two days ago I was hunting in the hills before sunrise. Blackfeet caught me. I had no horse, I was tired. They left my knife, my bow and one arrow, and sent me home to tell the Arapahoe that in another moon the medicine skin would be passed for war. The Blackfeet were on their way to the Yellowstone, to wipe out you and the Blanket Chief and your men."

"And you believed such a story?" scoffed Carson, hiding his swift alarm at this news.

"I believe my own eyes. I saw far off a camp of Blackfeet too many to count.

Plenty Eagle was waiting for his medicine to tell him to march. He is not far. He can strike in one day's march." The Elk's tone was positive. He spoke truth. "My one arrow was enough. Now I can go home rich, with scalp and horse and gun. I am going."

Carson mounted. Brave Elk bestrode Shunan's horse, with all his plunder, and now paused for one last word.

"When Singing Bird sees the red scalp, she will be glad. I promised it to her. You talked big but you have done nothing. The Americans are no good. If the Blackfeet take that skin you claim to have, and it makes them strong, then the Arapahoe will not wait for the other White Beaver medicine that crosses the mountains. They will make war at once."

Away went Brave Elk.

Carson turned homeward, and rode at his best pace toward the camp across the Yellowstone. He was thoughtful, perplexed. The sun was up, and flared curiously yellow, in a haze that tinged all the sky with a mustard saffron. The breeze was from the southwest, but now and again it struck his right cheek with changing, puffy gusts from the west, warm upon the skin. It meant a thaw.

What had Shunan been trying to say, when that arrow stilled him? Perhaps he had known the Blackfeet were on the move. But what had made him pull out in such a tearing hurry?

News now for Bridger. Brave Elk had spoken as with truth; the Blackfeet were coming. And Brave Elk would go on to claim Singing Bird. Well, there remained Plenty Eagle and his black hair to be taken. And Shunan's daughter, somewhere, with Laforay's claim upon her lovely scalp.

Carson frowned. What the Flatheads and Nez Percés in the northwest meant by their rigmarole about the great White Beaver medicine coming this next spring from the sunrise, was a puzzle. The air was getting full of medicine talk, medicine sign. But if the Blackfeet got hold of this white pelt, the sign would be Hell.

And they were coming to get it.

CHAPTER XV

ALL day, the company had been busy adding to the breastworks. Bridger took with utmost seriousness the warning Carson had conveyed to him.

Stout pieces of cut timber were leaned against the ramparts from the inside, until a rude palisade surrounded the camp. The lookout on the bluff kept sharp eye on the horizon across the plain, on the river curve around the leafless woods.

With mid-morning the wind had set strongly from the west, at first chilled, then with increasing tepid warmth until by noon the men, thick-blooded from the long cold, worked with leather hunting-shirts flung aside and under-shirts open at the throat. There was little sweat; the rushing air was thirsty, curiously dry. It sapped the moisture from the skin.

Laforay paused in wrestling with a log, and straightened up to wheeze. The wind blew his long black hair clear of his shoulders as he gazed about from parched, wrinkled face.

"By damn! Plenty bad sign, Kit. Medicine at work, sure. Those devil Blackfeet come under red sky now and we fignt for our hair."

Carson laughed. "We've had plenty red skies and they haven't come. The word of Brave Elk beats dreams. We'll likely be swapping lead tomorrow."

"They're holding off, mebbe account of this wind," put in Rube Herring. "Lead can't score true, arrers can't fly, in a cross wind like this. But something's doing. I itch worser'n Reynolds with the measles, and he's right bad, accordin' to Bridger."

"Tomorrow, sure," croaked Laforay. "They come under red sky over ground bare of winter. Their medicine say so. I see red sky, you bet; not sunset, sunrise, but low sky above, red like blood. I not see that bare ground of winter, but I see him all bare by morning. This medicine wind eat the snow like hungry buffalo herd eat the grass. Look! Already the snow, she go."

"Skin me for a beaver if it aint so!" exclaimed Herring. "This here wind is hot dry from the bellers of hell. It's suckin' up the snow like I suck marrow out'n a cracked bone. If the Blackfeet leave us our hair, we'll be settin' traps afore the week's out."

Carson's own hide itched and his cheeks burned as though scalded. He, like the rest, worked irritably, cursing with dry tongue and blinking with shriveled lids and hot eyes. He bestowed little thought upon Reynolds in the leanto, except to hope this gale would blow the measles out of camp, and so bring some good.

By the time the sun sank in that yellow west from which the furious air belched, large tracts of soil lay bare around the white scars of lessening drifts. The wind

blew on through a strange, brassy twilight, gustily warm yet bleak with arid harshness. The horses milled and fretted in their pen, restless with thirst and the whistling air.

SILENCE descended with the night. The wearied camp slept. . . . Carson was brought from sleep by an alarm. A shout, another. He sprang up; the lodge was emptying in a flurry of robes as men grabbed their arms and bolted. He followed at Laforay's heels, to stand in sheer amazement.

The sky above was murky, but the night was singularly thin and drenched with a ruddy glow from the north, mounting and flaming across the heavens, so that earth and stark faces and trees were flooded with the crimson of blood. Ranged along the defenses, men peered and pointed in a buzz of wonder.

The northern lights flamed higher, in a weaving shuttle of crimson. The air was still, knife cold, brittle dry. Carson prickled. Every nerve was taut as a notched bowstring, and when he brushed his hair aside with sweep of palm, it crackled with sparks. The horses, redly illumined, were snorting and trampling, tossing uneasy heads.

"By Gawd, the world's afire!" yapped somebody. "It's Kingdom Come!"

"It's Blackfeet come!" shrilled Laforay. "Bloody sky, bare ground—it is the sign! Now they come!"

"Look!" went up a shout. "Hell's opened! Laforay's right!"

The plain across the river was bathed in reflected crimson; the uplifts of its farther edge stood out against the wavering horizon. From the northwest quarter, a black torrent moved down, spreading into the plain. Blackfeet—a host!

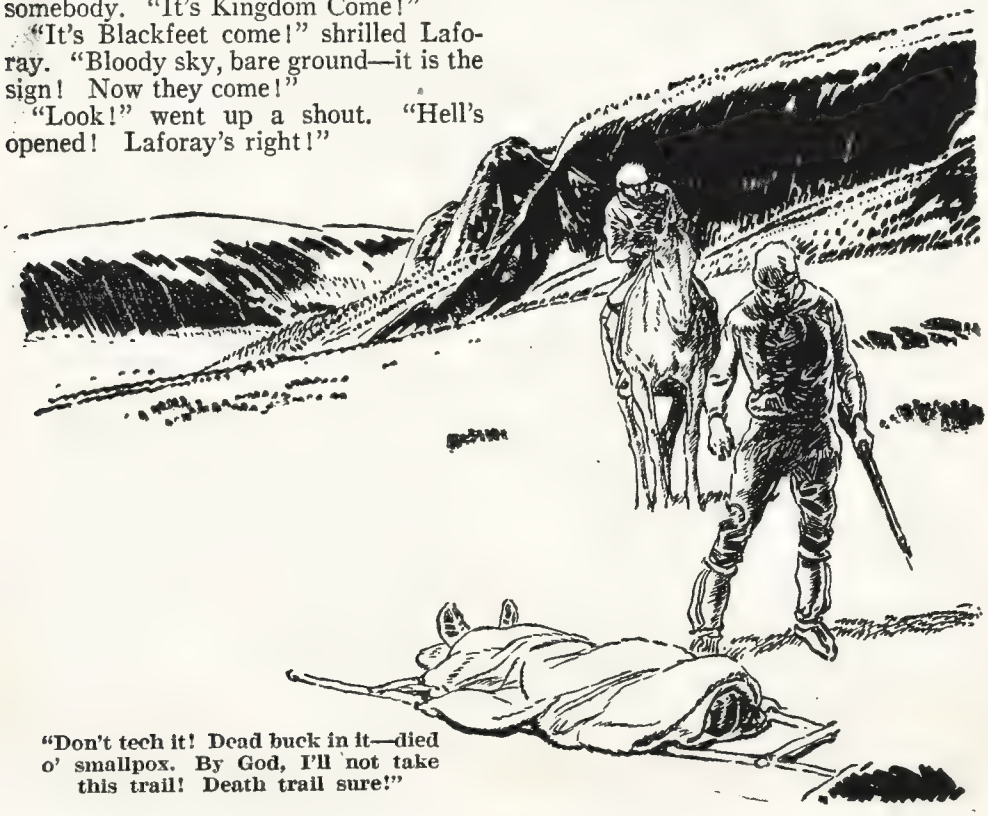
The torrent flowed on, marching, spreading. Men muttered; locks clicked. It was not far from dawn. The wavering glow was fading, the plain dulling to a faintly lurid dusk. Men drew breath. Bridger's voice lifted.

"Show's over. They aint got sand for a night scrap and ghost-trail in the dark. They've halted."

"Not for long, Jim; the dream say not," spoke up Laforay. "Morning will be the big fight. Better stay ready. Listen! They dance medicine."

Fires began to glimmer across the returning gloom. Four in all, as Bridger summed them; the Bloods, Piegans and Blackfeet, of the last-named confederacy, with their allies the Gros Vents. The faint, wild bedlam of medicine and war dance drifted down by snatches across the stillness.

One of the fires was moved forward, far forward—almost within rifle-shot. The whistle of Plenty Eagle was heard, now and again. Here and at the other



"Don't tech it! Dead buck in it—died o' smallpox. By God, I'll not take this trail! Death trail sure!"

fires, the redskins were bunched. Now and again a rifle was discharged; the chorused yells came clearly across the snow-patched earth.

The men were all crowded at the breastworks, watching, listening, expecting attack at any moment. Even Bridger was puzzled by the goings-on. Twice, a mass of mounted Blackfeet came surging forward, only to fall back again before coming within shot.

All hands, watching, waiting, were on hair-triggers. The men shifted place, spat, murmured with dry lips. Those crimson lights, the medicine talk, the red sky, rendered them all uneasy. Two men were on guard along the rear of the camp, a needless precaution; here was all the menace, out here in front.

The dawn began to lighten, the fires winked down, the turmoil quieted. Out across the plain grew a vast silence as the day neared. Carson, standing by himself and watching, swung around as Bridger stalked up to him.

"What d'ye make of it, Kit?"

"Looks queer," said Carson.

"Aint in nature, Injun nature, for them to front us in a scrap," growled Bridger. "No circling around. Settin' thar like sojers—huh! Aint reasonable."

Carson grunted assent. If Plenty Eagle meant to attack in the face of those rifles, which was almost incredible, he would have had the entire camp surrounded by warriors long ere this. If he did not mean attack, he would lose face with his own warriors. It was a puzzle.

"WHO'S watching the river?" Carson asked suddenly.

"Smith and Herndon. Let's take a prowl."

Carson moved off with him. It was hard to take their eyes from the black masses out there in front, threatening attack at any moment. They circled the breastworks here, with an occasional word to the intent, tense men, came around to the horse camp, moved back to the side fronting the Yellowstone. Little

danger to be apprehended here along the river bend, while the entire enemy force was out there in front. Yet, as Carson realized, this very fact was strange. A burst of rifle-shots brought both men around in stiffening alertness; another false alarm. They passed on.

"Hey, Herndon!" Bridger called out. "Everything quiet here?"

No answer. Beyond the breastwork, the ground stretched, snow-dotted, to the frozen river; even in the dawn-darkness, the patches of snow could be seen.

A grunt broke from Bridger. Carson leaped forward beside him to where the dark shape of Herndon leaned over the log defense. At Bridger's touch, the figure slipped sideways. With an astounded oath, Bridger straightened up.

"Dead and scalped! Smith! Consarn it, where are ye?"

SMITH too—knifed, scalped, already stiffening. No one was in sight. No Indians were near here. Suddenly Carson vaulted the logs.

"Here, Jim! Look at this!"

A snow patch that was not a snow patch. A buffalo robe, heaped and covered with snow, now fallen aside. Clear enough, at a glimpse, what had happened. Covered by this robe and snow, simulating one of the snow patches, moving forward by feet and inches, an Indian; then to rise suddenly and bury knife in guard.

"They were in. Aint in now," grunted Bridger. "Plenty Eagle raised that hell out yonder to cover 'em. Here! Wait a minute—"

Carson waited not, but followed as Bridger leaped away. Followed to the back of the hide leanto, where Reynolds lay. There was a long slash in the hide; no sound came from within. Bridger paused grimly.

"They opened the way for his ghost. Thanks for the trouble."

"What do you mean? They killed Reynolds?"

"Nope. He passed out during the night. I aint told nobody yet. No use looking now; no time to talk. They snuck in, got the pelt, and went. It's gone—"

A wild, thrilling chorus of yells pealed up and up from the Blackfoot host. It was caught up by the mountain men. Yells for Bridger arose. With one curt warning to keep a close mouth, Bridger dashed away. Carson glanced at the leanto, then went after. The pelt gone! How did Bridger know?

No time to think of that now. The daylight was mounting, the sky overhead was slightly hazed. The Blackfeet were in turmoil, whooping in wild exultation. Carson saw half a dozen trappers loping back to watch the river side. He, like the others, stared at the sky.

The eastern horizon was banded with rose, deepening momentarily. That to the north was veiled by a turbid pall, hanging like a curtain. The rays of the yet unseen sun, reflected on this suspended dust in the air, were turning the pall to scarlet. Exclamations of wonder, of awed alarm, ran along the breastworks. Now it was a thicker redness, like a sodden bloody blanket, hung above the Indian host.

"By damn, that's the sign!" blared Laforay's staccato. "Just as I dream!"

Bridger cursed such talk. "The blood's over their heads, not our'n."

"Hey! They're a-coming!" went up sharp yelps. "Look out, all hands!"

So it seemed. The host was moving. The other clans had come up to the Blackfoot array; they had dismounted and were moving forward afoot. Plenty Eagle was now in clear sight, to Carson's eager eye. They came on, under that red sky, over the bare ground of winter. They spread out, came forward like a wave, drew back again, the whistle of Plenty Eagle shrilling.

"Hold tight!" yelled Bridger. "Stay put, everybody!"

Carson cautioned the men around him. No battle here, unless the whites could be tempted out into the open. War drums were rattling and tapping, whoops blaring in a confused medley, rifles and muskets were banging away, until a white pall of smoke overhung the entire host. A few of the men made reply; not many.

"If they come on, let 'em come!" shouted somebody in frenzy of suspense. "Give 'em Green River!"

"Grips and Green River!" pealed up the answering yells. Skinning-knives, stamped with *G.R.*—"George Rex," said some, "Green River," said others.

CARSON'S blood quieted. No Green River today. No Blackfeet. When the powder-smoke thinned, the host was seen drawing away, mounting, flooding back whence they had come. Yells of whooping derision burst forth. One and all, the men demanded to mount and ride, pursue, fight.

But Carson, watching those warriors retire, knew the truth; his heart sank, as

dismay and consternation laid hold upon him with a cold grip. The white beaver was gone.

As yet, it was not known to others. The death of Herndon and Smith was known; the men were in a fury, but even the hottest spirits knew the folly of riding after that redskin host. Carson's gaze followed the last of them as they drifted away in the full daylight.

THEN Bridger was coming, beckoning him in silence. All danger past, fires were being built up and a meal prepared. The two went back to the slashed leanto.

"We'll go in the way his ghost went out," said Bridger grimly, pulling the hide aside. "Come on. Make sure. I pulled the blanket up over his face last night—"

Carson came in, looked, and looked away. No blanket at all, now; the dead man had been scalped. Then, looking again, Carson suddenly froze at sight of spotted face and chest. He caught Bridger's arm.

"Measles? Not by a damn' sight, Jim. Smallpox!"

"I suspicioned it," said Bridger calmly. "How d'ye know?"

"I nursed Bent once; he had it bad. The men at his fort, the Cheyennes, the 'Rapahoes, all had it."

"And Reynolds ketched it from that infernal Sioux blanket."

"But the beaver pelt?" Carson forced the words. "Where is it? How—"

"Listen. After Shunan lit out, I thought he'd hooked it. Nope. I found Reynolds layin' in a stew and muttering; had the white pelt in his hands."

"Who gave it to him?"

"Hell! He took it; his medicine made him do it. I tossed it back into a corner of the storehouse. When I found him last night, he'd got it again. Dying man's medicine aint to be gainsaid. I aimed to smoke out the sickness from it later. The varmint who scalped him, got it and run off. Now what do you figger, Kit?"

In those shrewd eyes, Carson read a deathly message from which he shrank.

"Shunan looked in, saw Reynolds bedded with the pelt, recognized smallpox, and ran like hell. That's what he was trying to tell me."

"Yep. He run to warn Plenty Eagle. The trail o' that pelt's a death trail. Let it go. Come spring, there won't be no more crowded Blackfoot lodges. You aint seen smallpox hit in prime territory, Kit. It'll kill more'n bullets. But don't tell the men. They'd make tracks out of here; we're in no shape to travel. We got to slide Reynolds under the ice without anybody seeing him. Dast you tech him?"

Carson grunted. "Told you once I'd not stand back from the smallpox."

Together they wrapped up the dead man, a grisly task. Nobody outside regarded them as they went forth with the burden and on down to the river. They slipped it into an air-hole. The camp was abuzz with talk, with eating, with loud vaunting. Carson, once off the ice, turned and met the gaze of Bridger.

"Well, Jim? You and me thinking the same thing?"

Bridger scowled. "Don't be a damn' fool, Kit. It aint our doin's. I don't savvy all this different medicine talk. Some tribes claim the white beaver comes later; some say the Blackfeet—"

"Hold on, Jim," Carson said steadily. "Don't hide the trail. Do we go out?"

"Won't do no good. They won't believe us."

"No matter. We got to tell 'em. I'm leaving soon enough on my own business. I aim to have my grip in the Eagle's top feathers. But—"

Bridger stood silent for a moment, scowling, then made the sign that the talk was ended, and turned.

HALF an hour later they rode out, twenty men riding after them. Laforay, Rube Herring and two others rode out also, each party to contact redskins if possible and seek a parley. Bridger evaded curious questions with specious excuses that allayed curiosity.

Carson always remembered that ride with a little shrinking horror, as one remembers what might have been but was not.

No word came from Rube Herring's party. Their own outfit, later in the day, sighted Blackfeet, or more correctly a hunting party of Piegans. The peace sign, Bridger and Carson riding forth alone, gradually quieted suspicion, and a chief came out to meet them while his warriors took cover. Somehow, Carson felt as though the desperate earnest of them both had impelled that chief forward, as though their own frantic inward urge had brought him to quiet their very souls.

They talked, by sign and word. They warned of the smallpox, they told what had taken place; Carson abandoned dignity, and gained only cold contempt.

The Piegan chief regarded them, listened, and his eyes glittered at them in derision.

"You are children," he made response. "You are women. Your tongues are forked. You come with lies because the White Beaver medicine is ours. Go back to your lodges and wait until we come to take your scalps and give you to our women for torment."

And making the "talk ended" sign, he turned and rode away.

"Satisfied?" asked Bridger grimly. Carson shrugged and assented.

Back in the fort again, they came on high talk and vociferous boasting. Rube Herring was back with his party, bootless. Plenty Eagle himself had jumped them, with a dozen warriors.

The four had fought off, had ridden off, had somehow got clear.

"I tell you," brayed Herring, "I seen the bullet lift the sack on that varmint's chest! He's lead proof, dead sure."

"What's that?" Carson came alert. "You had a shot at Plenty Eagle?"

"As fair as ever I took at standing buck, Kit! I drawed fine and pulled, with the bead centering his medicine sack. I'll swear by the shirt-tail of Moses, as my pappy used to say, the sack swung when the ball hit. But the devil just swung his hoss and rode off like nothing had happened."

Carson was in no mood to flatter the other's vanity.

"Hell! You flashed a rolling ball at him. Spittle won't answer for patch and rammer. The lead'll carry, but it aint got the bite. You loaded too fast. There's your answer."

"I knowed that when you were sucking at your mammy," roared Herring angrily. "I tell you, the bullet struck the medicine bag fair and square! Next time, I'll try Injun hide, not medicine hide. I'll learn how thick his gall covers him."

"Lead no good," Laforay cackled. "It take bullet of horn or silver. Remember, twice I fire at him and he care no damn."

"Well," spoke up Bridger, "we'll get a chance at him ag'in when Laforay's bear comes out to stay. Won't be long now. You'll have your hands in his hair yet, Kit."

"I'm not waiting," Carson said in his calm, quiet way that brooked no protest. "Soon as I run off some bullets, I'm after him. Tomorrow. I'm staying for nothing and nobody."

His challenge met prompt answer.

This same night the skies clouded thickly. By morning, a blizzard was covering the vengeance trail, wiping it from sight. And the bare trees moaning along the river, with hopes of spring deferred, sighed to angry men of patience.

But Carson wondered whether, had Plenty Eagle stood in the moccasin of that Piegan chief, the story of smallpox might not have been credited. He and Bridger made no further talk of the matter. It was their own secret.

CHAPTER XVI

LAFORAY'S bear had come out to stay. The geese winged their travois wedges across the high sky, the willows were growing supple, the cottonwood buds were swelling, and the ice of the river was rotting. The brigade was ready. Wounds had healed rapidly under Bridger's promise of action and the speeding weather signs.

"We'll march nor'west for the heads of the Missouri," Bridger announced. "If that don't draw the Blackfeet from cover, then I'm a skunk! We'll trap the season out, then swing down to Fort Hall on the Snake to refit with what's needed, and make for summer rendezvous on the Green. All suited?"

Carson, who had stayed perforce, only shrugged. The Blackfeet had arrived out of the northwest. Back they had gone, with the medicine pelt, into the northwest. Somewhere in the northwest they should be found, strong in medicine,

defying any trespass upon the hunting-grounds they prized most highly.

Strong in the white beaver medicine? Carson had his suspicions as to that. In these few weeks no word of any kind had come in. The white beaver skin would not be passed on until the trails of the divide were open. The Blackfeet had suffered losses, they had what they had come to get, and would lick their wounds ere seeking more.

What of Singing Bird? Still held as hostage, or returned to her people? Carson grew hot as he thought of Plenty Eagle at the end of a shortened trail. He grew cold as he thought of the girl held in a foul and wailing plague-swept village. Only he and Bridger knew the secret of the medicine skin, nor did any of the men share the secret of the scalped Reynolds.

THEY were off at last, as the first of the fresh beaver cuttings floated down the streams, and the hills greened. Setting traps at evening, lifting them in the morning, gleaning well by the way, the march pushed on to cross the higher country and hunt the waters of the Three Forks, at the heads of the Missouri.

And, as they went, no trace of Blackfeet. To Carson and to Bridger, this peace was ominous. As Herring opined, "Where Injuns aint, they're sartin to be most."

Upon a day, the advance party rode well in the lead. Carson, Laforay, Herring—twenty in all, with rein loose and rifle at ease, eyes and ears on guard. Abruptly, Laforay spoke out.

"Look out! We have a fight. My medicine tell me. I feel my knife stir in sheath like baby in mother. Come sure, quick!"

They were riding up a gentle slope studded by boulders and dotted with pines. Beyond the rock-strewn ridge ahead, they should get view of the promised land. On the right, curving for the ridge, was a rampart line of sharply rising hills. On the left, a terraced downward drop into a cañon where only a bird could find footing. Thus led the pass.

And now, as though born of Laforay's words, a broad and hastening trail slanted athwart the course. A trail of hoof and moccasin, of dragging travois, shreds of domestic wreckage, broken poles. The signs of a village on the move. A Blackfoot village.

"Trail's a day old," said Herring, amid nods. "Send word back to Bridger?"

"Nothing to tell Jim yet," Laforay countered. "They go around that ridge, or else through by the pass. We go on top and see."

"I vote the same," Herring agreed. "My finger itches. What say, Kit?"

"Bridger can come on at his own gait," Carson said. "May be the Eagle himself. I aim to keep going."

They pressed on. Then suddenly Laforay pointed.

"Look! Look! You see Injun on them rock, making sign of enemy come? They try to hold the way. Village close. My knife, she stir true. Village close!"

"Likely the Eagle himself. Hurray! Time Bridger comes up, we'll have more hair—"

"Wait! Look hyar!" Matson, one of the men who had ridden off to scout that slanting trail, was waving at them, shouting. "Hyar! Come on!"

They rode to join him. He had halted near a travois litter, abandoned beside the trail, a blanket-covered form on it. Carson shrank a little. He knew what was coming. And he was right. Matson turned to climb back into the saddle, face beaded with sweat, hands shaking.

"Don't tech it! Dead buck in it. I looked in; died o' smallpox. Yonder in the bresh is a woman's body. By God, I'll not take this trail! Death trail sure."

"Damn!" said Laforay. "Live Injuns on that ridge. I go that far anyhow."

"Me too," Herring agreed. "I'll take no defy from any Blackfeet. Let the damned pelt go. That medicine has turned sour. But we'll clear the ridge."

CARSON rode on in the lead, up the pass for the ridge. The men strung along. Laforay drew up to his stirrup.

"Too bad, Kit. We mus' let village go. Mebbe that 'Rapahoe squaw, she's dead. But Plenty Eagle's on the ridge up there, sure!"

Carson nodded. "Ridge has to be cleared, or the trail is cut for the whole brigade. I'll not wait for Bridger, though. The rest of you do as you please. I'm going over, strike the trail again, and keep going to the end of it."

"I see your knife red, my knife red," said Laforay moodily. "Much death. Death for many, for some of us mebbe. Mebbe you find squaw, Kit; got to hurry."

Hurry? Carson's heart sank as he looked ahead, as the riders bunched, as they realized what they faced and heard the taunting yells of the redskins above.

One end of the ridge broke down sharply for the cañon; here the village had passed. No thoroughfare there, with Blackfeet clustered above, arrows already singing, voices mocking. At the other side were the cliffy ramparts of the abutting hills. And all along in the front, a smooth upward rise of two hundred yards, thinly grown to grass and brush, sprinkled with low rocks, crested on top with a bristle of stunted pines and jagged boulders, where the whoops of the enemy rose. The men lost heart.

"They're too well forted. We'd lose every hoss on that open slope. Wait for Jim!"

A hundred or more Blackfeet up there, obviously. Carson's pause was momentary, as the yells and taunts were hurled down. But one voice, well-remembered, came above the others, gibing at him.

"Ho, Little Chief! You are all women. Turn around. Go back to your pots. Up here are men."

"If you're a man and not a squaw, wait!"

Carson's shout pealed up; he shook his rein, sent his horse forward. The horse leaped to jamming moccasin hills and clapping palm, swerved from a fusil ball that jerked up dust, recoiled from the steep slope, the yells, the arrows. Laforay tumbled off his mount.

"Wait, Kit! I go too!"

He was stripping to moccasins and Indian clout, belted himself with knife and hatchet, reslung horn and pouch over shoulder. He stood naked, long-haired, lean of arms, knobby of knees, wrinkled and scarred. A tremendous whooping yell burst from him.

"Ho! I am Iroquois! You are rats hiding in holes. I come smoke you out damn' quick!" He paused to cram bullets into his mouth. "Leave hoss, Kit. Go quick. Village run."

Carson dismounted. Laforay was a host in himself. He heard Herring's hot oaths behind him, heard the other men cheering, laughing, as they ran with him and Laforay for the slope of death.

UP they went, stooping, panting, dodging. Lead hummed, feathered shafts whistled, but the Blackfeet shot high. They came to the crest, neared it. Carson heard his own voice yelling in the Snake lingo:

"Wait for me, Plenty Eagle! Stand in my way, squaw! Wait!"

The fire died down. They had reached the crest, came flooding over it. The enemy had given way. The ridge here was broad, broken with scraggly trees and large rocks. By the glimpses of painted shapes dodging about, the enemy were fewer than appeared; but enough to play for time while the village fled.

Now battle met battle, stubbornly, men shooting from cover, yelling, rifles cracking. Through it lifted the whistle and the lusty voice of Plenty Eagle, rallying his warriors, directing them. Carson dodged on, eyes and ears searching that lordly chief. Suddenly he heard another voice, in English:

"This way! Over here, everybody!"

The voice prickled in his memory. Man's voice, it seemed; but he had heard this voice ere now, misleading to betrayal. Shunan's daughter! He heard Laforay at his side, grunting, exclaiming, recognizing that voice, and then darting aside, glistening naked like a snake worming among the rocks.

CARSON held to his course, a hound of fury. A vista opened before him. The tall massy shape of Plenty Eagle closed it. Carson saw him pause, raging and fearless; the rifle cracked. A feather floated from the sleek crown, and the Eagle was gone. Carson cursed his hasty shot and paused to reload. A yell reached him.

"Kit! Laforay! Here, somebody—I'm down—"

No false lure this time—it was Herring's voice. Carson broke into a run, hearing whoops of triumph. He saw that Herring was down in a little clearing, thigh broken, shirt reddened, Blackfeet racing in to take the trophy, two of them. Herring, with mighty effort, half sat up, swung rifle, and fired. One brave went down. Carson lined on the other—and sighted a third figure charging in like a cougar on full bound. Plenty Eagle! But no changing now. That warrior's hatchet was up for the *coup*.

The bullet went true. The Blackfoot yelled and plunged headlong. Carson, with a shout, dropped rifle and hurled himself forward. The Eagle was too swift for him—pounced and drove his hatchet through Herring's feeble guard, stooped and swooped with his knife, and then was away with his scalp-yell ringing high. Away, not pausing to fight, but vanishing amid the rocks.

Carson lifted the crimsoned head. The eyes of Herring opened, looked up at him with recognition, held a glimmer of

a smile, and then closed; Herring was dead. With one leap, Carson was up, had his rifle, and was after Plenty Eagle.

By the sounds, the Blackfeet were in retreat, retiring not in flight but stubbornly. Carson, raging, fuming, knew he had lost the Eagle again. He ran, peering, zigzagging, frantic to pick up the trail. Wounded Blackfeet, vicious as stretched rattlesnakes, lay here and there among the rocks.

Another figure uprose suddenly. . . . Old Laforay, whirling about, grinning widely and lifting hand to Carson, his knife still unstained. Carson arrived, looked and saw Shunan's daughter for the last time.

Slim and rounded in her doeskins, but no longer lovely. The death shot had not disfigured her; it had gone straight to the heart. Her braids lay flung on either side of her upturned face; an ugly face now, repellant, seared with the pits of smallpox as rain drops spatter soft clay. Gone was all the masking lure of eyes and lips.

"By damn, she play no more trick!" exulted Laforay. "You not find Plenty Eagle?"

"No."

"Too late. Men be coming back, I guess; 'fraid to follow to village. Village be on run, too. Well,"—Laforay fingered his knife-point,—"this woman all same man. Wait a minute, then we find Rube."

"Rube's gone," Carson said. "Under. Plenty Eagle got him. My hands are empty and I'm going on."

"Wait! You're heap crazy! Can't do nothing without hosses—"

Carson was gone regardless, running. Plenty Eagle was somewhere. The village must be in wild flight.

As he ran, he saw that the whole top of the ridge had apparently been cleared. The men gathered together, were on his left, heading back toward the horses. He caught their complaints of light horns and pouches, their cursing of Plenty Eagle, their resolve to let the village go its way doomed. They did not notice him, and he slipped on.

THERE were dark stains among the rocks. Here, he saw, near the far edge of the ridge, a stand had been made. He hurried on, crossed the high horizon, had a sight of the lowering ground beyond. A stream glinted in the sunset.

Beyond, against a patch of dusty ground, lodges were struck, horses and travois were already loaded; squaws and children worked like mad. Mounted warriors, refugees from rout, emerged from the down slope and glinted on with hastening shout and signal. Plenty Eagle! Singing Bird—if alive still! Carson, his throat dry, ran on.

Then, all suddenly, without warning, he beheld an amazing thing.

Two hurt warriors, one supporting the other at a hobble, bolted from hiding-place among the clustered rocks ahead. Carson's sights found them, but he held his fire as another figure leaped into sight with a great shout. Plenty Eagle!

A chieftain bloody, proud, standing with opposing arms, crying something at the two men, angrily. One of them flung a furious jeer at him:

"Out of the way. You are nobody. Your medicine is death—"

A hatchet flew with the words, a hatchet from warrior to chieftain disgraced. The cast was badly timed. The handle, not the keen blade, rang on the bronze chest and went clattering among the rocks. The two warriors hobbled on with another insult. The Eagle reached out, grasped his gun from among the rocks, turned with fury. Then Carson screamed at him:

"Plenty Eagle! Wait for me, woman, wait!"

STARING, intent, haggard, the chief faced about. Then his eyes glowed, his gun swung up. Carson heard the ball *whish* like an angry hornet; his own rifle leaped to the release of powder and lead. The two shots were almost blended. And the medicine sack on the Eagle's chest lifted and swung.

A cry, fierce and sonorous, burst from Plenty Eagle. He staggered backward, dropped his gun, went to hands and knees—was up again, tottering erect, chest crimsoned, lips drooling redly. His hatchet was in his grip now.

He came forward, walking as though unhurt. It was incredible, to Carson. The ball had gone true, the medicine sack was dyed darkly with blood, yet the man walked with head high, his bloodied lips twisted to a chant of defiance.

"I see you, Little Chief. You see me. My medicine is strong against your bullet. It turned the hatchet of those cowards. It turned the sickness. You are a man but you are helpless. Now you are going to die—"

Carson dropped rifle, whipped out knife, and with an oath hurled himself

in. Plenty Eagle halted to meet the rush. His hatchet swept out and down. Carson parried it and the Green River knife drove in.

Head back, Plenty Eagle sent his death yell at the sky, and with a burst of crimson sank to the earth. Carson stood above him, waiting; those proud black eyes opened and sought the setting sun. Carson leaned forward.

"Listen! This is death. Where is Singing Bird?"

The bullet had not failed, after all. The naked bronze body was scored by bullets and blows. The painted face was lightly pockmarked. The medicine sack had fallen aside and with every shallow breath, life came bubbling from the bullet-hole in Plenty Eagle's chest. His lips moved slightly. Carson bent to hear the murmur.

"Dreams lie. They lie. All the medicine is bad—"

With that, Plenty Eagle shivered as though cold, and relaxed, and died: A fallen chief but still a chief. And with him died his dream of savage empire.

Carson used the impatient knife and secured his trophy. Then he snatched at the medicine sack. It held a little plate of sheeted mica, and the snipped piece of white beaver pelt sent by Bridger in mockery.

The mica was drilled through. The ball had gone on through flesh and bone. The sack might have blunted a loosely seated ball, but through it had gone the hard-rammed bullet delivered by bright-grained English powder.

CARSON rose to the sound of hoof-beats. He saw Laforay coming up, clothed and mounted, with a led horse. In his belt was tucked a scalp with long and glossy hair.

"By damn, you get Plenty Eagle! Good! I come look for you. Now we go to Bridger. Nothing more to do here."

"Wrong." Carson reached for the horse, thankfully. "I'm going on."

"That 'Rapahoe gal? Plenty Eagle say where she is?"

"No. I'll find her."

"What I tell you las' winter? I see sky like blood, big fight, death for many, our knives bloody, the 'Rapahoe squaw waiting for you. But the trail is dark. I not see her now. We go find Bridger, Kit."

Carson gathered rein, turned horse.

"Go ahead; tell Bridger I'll be back."

"Look—nobody down there. They travel fast—oh, hell damn! You one big fool, but I go far as you do."

Carson rode on, aiming for a lesser pass ahead, and Laforay rode with him.

IN the gathering darkness they put the down slope under hoof rapidly. Here was the village site ahead, a few lodges still standing along the stream, but all deserted and empty now. The dust of flight rose far in the fading western glow.

The village site was littered with abandoned articles, the lodges were closed. And of a sudden, Laforay burst out:

"Wait! Only dead here, my medicine say. Go on, Kit, go on! She be in lodge all alone. I see her, my medicine show me lodge by itself. Look for that!"

They found it, after a little, a solitary lodge up the stream, Carson trusting with curious dull confidence to this medicine talk. A lodge with the flap fastened down; it was all cold, no sound came from it. Carson dismounted, Laforay also, in a sweat and a tremble.

"Death here, Kit. Mebbe you not like what you see. Better stay away."

Carson walked to the flap, jerked it free and threw it back. He stooped and looked inside. Death, yes.

The old medicine-man, hideous and contorted, an arrow through his heart. And cast down beside him, bedraggled, dishonored, the white beaver pelt. The Blackfeet had turned on the makers of this medicine, turned on Plenty Eagle, on this medicine which had brought them destruction instead of glory.

Suddenly a cry broke from Carson. Beyond the medicine-man, a form trussed corpse-like in a blanket, upturned face pallid, eyes closed. Her face—Singing Bird. Dead? He darted in, lifted her, staggered outside. Laforay lent a hand, cut the lashings, and cried out:

"Look, by gar! She not dead, Kit!"

Her eyes opened. She looked up, wondering, incredulous, afraid.

"You!" she murmured. "It is a dream. I am dead."

Carson laughed and tapped the scalp in his belt.

"Plenty Eagle, not you. You see me. You are well. Have you had the sickness?"

"No," she said. "That is why the Blackfeet tied me up. They said I made it, because it passed me by."

"And it passed me by at Bent's Fort," said Carson. "The sign is good. Let's go."

Singing Bird—dead? Carson darted in, lifted her trussed form and staggered outside the lodge of death.

Singing Bird cast off the blanket, came to her feet, and laughed a little as she met the flashing eyes of Carson. This trail was ended. The medicine was good.

CHAPTER XVII

JUNE had burgeoned. Packs were heavy; the beaver had come well to trap. Fort Hall on the Snake was in prospect now, and from there, the summer rendezvous again in the Valley of the Green.

The brigade, all united for the march into the fort, stopped this night near a village of the friendly Flatheads, beside a little lake. A good folk, these Flatheads of the Oregon country; open of hand, rich in herds, hostile to the horse-thieving Blackfeet.

The leaders were made welcome in the village; there was open talk, no secrecy.

"The Blackfeet? They are nothing. A sickness has rotted them for their lies and they have gone into the bellies of the wolves and ravens. They did not know of any great medicine, and they

are punished; they died in their lodges. The White Beaver medicine is yet to come."

"Who tells you that?" Bridger demanded.

"The Nez Percés say it, others say it; they have been told. The White Beaver medicine that makes people strong who have it, will pass the mountains this summer. We are going to meet it."

There was a hum of assent, of eagerness, but no war talk.

"Hell! Rid of one trouble, into another!" Bridger turned to Laforay. "What's that somebody said about Fort Hall?"

"The old man there say the Hudson's Bay hold it."

"It is true." The old Flathead was positive. "I was there. The captain sent word to the Snakes, the Nez Percés, everybody, to come and trade with him. We do not need to go to the Americans at Green River."

Bridger fumed. "The only American post west of the mountings gone under! Oregon all British. Hudson's Bay Company facing east—now another White Beaver medicine due. 'Cording to the sign there's going to be powder burned this summer, both sides the divide—"

Suddenly Laforay leaped to his feet, arms flung wide, eyes dilated.

"Jim! Kit! My medicine tells me. I see it plain. White Beaver, she come by the South Pass for sure. No red sky this time."

"Who brings it?" demanded Carson.

"I dunno. Injuns there. We are there, you and me. I see shouting, shooting, White Beaver strong, very strong, not to be stopped—" Suddenly as the exaltation came on upon him, it was gone again. He checked himself. His face became stolid, his eyes dulled. "All gone now! If I tell you more, you say I'm crazy."

He would utter no further word.

ON they rode again—into Fort Hall where the British flag flew now, covering the trail into Oregon. Thomas McKay was there, dark and suave and firm, welcoming Carson and Bridger warily, holding council with them.

"And have you furs for the post?"

"Not for this post," answered the blunt Bridger. "Them furs go to rendezvous and American market. We need to outfit a trifle, though. How happens you're here?"

McKay smiled. "The American owners found the trade not to their liking. The Injuns wouldn't come in. They prefer the Company methods."

"And the Company told 'em where to float their sticks." Bridger spat. "What's this new medicine talk that's filling the air? We took care of one talk. The mouths of the Blackfeet are closed. Plenty Eagle's medicine was bad."

"So I've heard. I know nothing about this new talk." McKay shrugged. "As far as I can learn, the Nez Percés look for the White Beaver medicine to come from the sunrise. I don't pay much attention to medicine talk. That is, unless it threatens Company interests."

"AND in this case, what?" Bridger demanded. "Your medicine points east, your feet are turned that way. White Beaver medicine will smooth the trail, mebbe?"

McKay was earnest, honest.

"The Company has absolutely nothing to do with this medicine craze. If the country east of the mountains falls away from the Americans, it'll fall into a British Northwest. London and Washington will come to an agreement—"

"There won't ary agreement shine while there's American rifles in Oregon," flared up Bridger. "If you count on an Injun war to smooth the trail, you might's well lift your traps, for there's no ketch. We'll make this here trail down the Snake a war trail clean to the Columby."

"We'll not quarrel, Bridger!" McKay smiled. "Oregon is already in full possession of the British, as you see. Your government is scarcely prepared to march troops over the mountains. No, Oregon can't be won by arms, except as the Company controls it, by arms and wisdom and peace. Well, Mr. Carson, you decided not to trap with me, eh?"

"Right. I had other work to do."

"You and Shunan had trouble, I understand."

"All ended now," said Carson. "His bones are clean. And his daughter's as well."

McKay frowned. "His daughter's? A handsome girl, a wonderful girl! You say she's dead?"

"Yep," said Bridger, "and she was a good string to your fiddle, warn't she? Well, let it pass. Kit's got Plenty Eagle's hair, and the 'Rapahoe are going to figure the Americans are somebody, you bet. Well, do we trade with you or not?"

Trade for beaver, yes; outfit competitors, no. McKay was put out, disap-

pointed, thrown into consternation by the upset of all his hopes. These bales of American beaver were a small fortune.

The brigade rode away for the Valley of the Green. . . .

Bands were hastening eastward now, and the summer rendezvous camps were gathering—Snake, Flathead, Nez Percé, Pend d'Oreille. White Beaver medicine! White Beaver medicine! The words were on every tongue. What they meant, none knew; if the Nez Percés knew, they would not say. But the flame was everywhere, spreading like wildfire. Strong medicine, to make the hearts stout!

Who had spread this, whence it had come, what it meant, was impossible to say. Most took it literally. Carson suspected some other meaning, suspected that Laforay knew or guessed; but Laforay held stubborn silence and disclaimed knowledge.

So they marched on, amid banter, confusion, doubts, defiance, and they came at last into the rendezvous. Before the brigade had unpacked, Bridger and his aides were called into council by other leaders, all puzzling over the same thing. What was this White Beaver medicine? The redskins had gone crazy with talk of it.

"How about it, Bridger?"

"I've allus found the strongest medicine is a strong heart," said old Bridger. "If we have to fight all the Injuns to oncet, do it! Our daddies did it back in Kaintuck and Ohio. The trail we've opened into Oregon aint to be closed."

"Right. The goods caravan from the Missouri aint come in, is overdue. The Utes and the 'Rapahoes are holding off. Mebbe they got the medicine, or are waiting on it—"

"No!" Laforay yelled out excitedly. "It come by the South Pass! It come now, she's be on the way. It bring smoke, shooting, shouting—hurry!"

"Hey!" Yells lifted to those in council. "There go the Injuns!"

DREAM or shrewd hearing on Laforay's part, no matter. The Indians were mounting and pelting away. The whites followed, rifles ready to hand. There was mad running and mounting and madder riding. Bridger took the lead, others pelted after, at his heels.

The rider galloping in on the trail from the South Pass had fired his rifle in air as signal, but Bridger scarcely drew rein on meeting him.

"What's the sign?"

"Caravan's near the top, bound over and down."

"That there White Beaver medicine?"

"You've said it."

"Come on!"—and Bridger thundered away with the mob at his heels.

The long scored trail up the slope of the South Pass was flattened by the thudding hoofs. Now the summit rose ahead, bare and level, the open gateway into an Oregon hung up as the prize to the stronger party. If the medicine call brought the tribes of mountains and plains on the war trail, the road into the Northwest might for a long time be slippery with blood. And worse. Carson remembered McKay's remark, of aforetime:

"That's only another step. If the United States can't hold all that country from the Indians, better give over the bad bargain to people who can."

THE verge of the broad summit was ahead. There they glimpsed a milling throng, whites and Indians, volleys of shouts, smoke spurting, guns banging. Bridger had his rifle ready, others were ready, as they tore in. The caravan was surrounded. It looked like a battle in all truth.

Then Bridger gaped. Horses were reined in. Astounded realization drove home.

Not a battle at all. Madly circling whites and Nez Percés flashing salutes of harmless powder, yelling jubilantly. Gawking trappers and Indians, the St. Louis caravan at impatient halt. In the center of all a little group of States travelers, trail-worn, on their knees, facing Oregon, the American flag waving. Carson heard the murmurs of the crowding Nez Percé women:

"White Beaver! White Beaver! The White Beaver come!"

"Goddlemighty!" yawped Bridger in astonishment. "White women! Aint so! Can't be!"

It was. Two white women, American white women, young women. The doctor of last summer's rendezvous, Whitman, stood up and came to Bridger.

"You see, I brought them, as I engaged to do!"

"Aint so!" gasped Bridger. "Another medicine dream, that's what!"

Some laughed. But Whitman frowned, puzzled.

"That's what I don't understand, Bridger. They tell us we've been ex-

pected. These Nez Percés keep talking about white beaver having come; they seem to refer to the women. I took two Nez Percé boys back east with me last year. They talked a great deal about a white beaver dream, some medicine sign that would cross the mountains and change the color of the country. When they learned that white women were coming with us, they seemed tremendously impressed. Could they have sent word ahead? It is impossible."

Jim Bridger rubbed his chin.

"The arrer flies," he muttered. "The arrer flies. If you can tell me how Injuns read sign out of the air, I can tell you why buffler stampede on a calm day, with not even a snake in striking distance of 'em. Where you aim to go?"

"On through Oregon. To the lower Columbia."

"Them your wagons?"

"Yes."

"Can't be did. You can't take wheels, let alone women."

"One of the ladies is my wife. The other is the wife of Brother Spalding. They are going through. The wagons will go as far as possible. We'll mark a trail for other wheels to follow with other Americans, men and women, for Oregon. We'll be making ready for them."

"Aim to settle your women out yonder? Why, there aint a white woman 'twixt here and the mouth of the Columby! None there, even."

Whitman laughed. "There soon will be. We carry the Bible, the Flag, the American home, Bridger. We're here to occupy Oregon. You'll soon see the trails of the plains and mountains white with wagons."

"By damn!" broke out Laforay, all a-stare. "I see the sign, sure! White women—White Beaver sign. It pass the mountains, make the stronger side who have it!"

Bridger slapped his leather thigh, his eyes moist.

"White skin, prime grade! Injuns and Hudson's Bay can't match it. Beats brown skin and old pelt, sure. Reckon, though, I'll stick to brown skin as long as beaver swim; it's best at squaw work."

CARSON felt a touch, and turned. Singing Bird stood there, her eyes shining.

"Little Chief, you are glad? You will follow the white women? The Nez Percés say they are the medicine; all the land will be white, not red."

"Go back with the women, Singing Bird," said Carson. "Presently I will come. All will be made straight. The trail is clear."

Bridger's jovial voice broke in:

"Movin' along, Kit; ketch up, ketch up! There'll be Fourth o' July doin's in the camp. We'll all dance medicine. Danged if white skins aint good for eyes and heart! Howsomever, it didn't come out here to tend pot on the trapline. Brown skin's fittenest there."

Carson made no answer. He climbed into the saddle and sat there, alone, his gaze flickering across the scene, yet seeing nothing here. Singing Bird had gone with the others. Two white women, only two; but they were breaking a medicine trail clear across the plains into farthest Oregon.

INDEPENDENCE DAY of 1836. Another medicine sign for the Hudson's Bay to read; he wondered what Thomas McKay would say to this. McKay? Not him alone, but Bridger and all these laughing, excited mountain men. Not theirs to laugh, if they could only realize the truth. Maybe Rube Herring was lucky after all, and the woman who had waited for him—and would wait a longer time now. . . .

Wheels. A new symbol, Carson mused darkly, to replace the old symbol of the medicine sack. That was passing now. Wheels were coming; Bible, flag, farmers. Nobody else could see it, but Carson saw it as he sat there. The brief flaming glory of the mountain men was doomed. They were doomed. Beaver was doomed, and trapping. Queer how the men had talked that night in camp, about living to see what would happen around here! They would all see it quickly enough, but none of them had guessed right. Wheels—that was it. White women and wheels and homes.

Carson thrilled suddenly. He had it. He had found it—the elusive thing, the aim and end, the reason for his being here, the future ahead of him. Prime mountain man? No! He was done with all that, for ever. He had found himself now. Wheels were coming; wheels with need for guides, white women with need for guards. The mountain passes must be explored. California and Oregon and the Salt Lake country must be opened up. "Bridger says it can't be done. It must be done, it will be done; wheels will go everywhere. There's the future for a man, there's his

living, his occupation, his ambition, his reason for being!"

Bridger was right. Brown skin was "fittenest" for squaw work when beaver came to fleshing-block and stretching-hoop. But that was all done with. A few more seasons, and the swarming beaver were gone. No future there; with wheels lay the future, and white women, and homes!

He stirred in the saddle. His long gaze focused on the figures trudging afar. Queer things stirred in his brain, in his heart. A moment had swept everything away and away; he was changed, everything was changed. His eyes were opened, and the road was opened, the road of the future. Singing Bird was compliant; whatever happened, in her view, was good. Let her go. Now, as in the instant when his knife had poised above that trapped and dying Blackfoot, time stopped for Carson; now, as then, flashing things flickered across his brain.

Queer, he thought, what depth of wisdom lay in medicine talk. White beaver medicine—to make strong those who have it. Make strong! These were white women, making their men strong in the present and the future. The vanishing race, the mountain men, would stick to their lodge-keepers, and pass with the beaver. That was all done now. The plains would be white with wagon-tops. White women for white men—aye, by God!

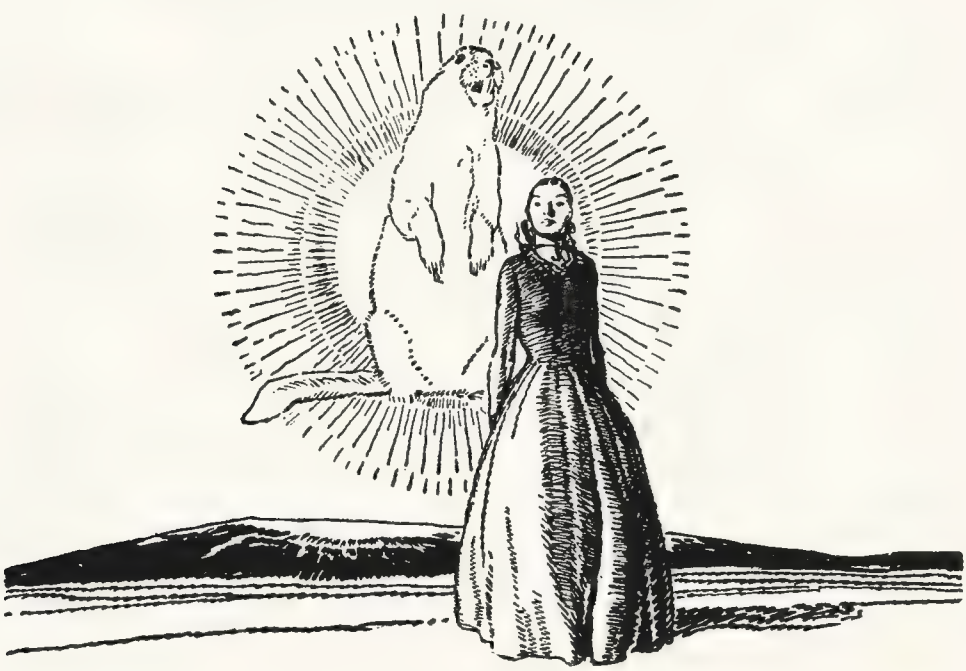
Pursuit of youth, headstrong implacable intent, the ambition of months, the long trail by snow and stream—all changed in a moment. All over and gone and departed. He realized it, struggled against it, yielded to it as he sat brooding. Already his decision was made. Yet he lingered upon thought. . . .

As he picked up his reins, something stirred at his belt; it was the scalp of Plenty Eagle, so long sought, so bitterly taken. His lips curved wryly. That, too, was a symbol; a symbol of all he had hoped and been and attained. But now there were new things to be attained. A revulsion against everything that was Indian stirred and quickened and burgeoned in his heart. He loosed the scalp from his belt and looked down at it, musing.

Odd, so sudden a change! But perhaps it had been growing in him, unperceived, this long while. Whitman's words had opened the trail to him. He could see the future now, very clearly. No man goes ahead in a straight line, always. Life is not like that; the road turns, branches off. New aims, new ambitions, suddenly sweep into light. New horizons, unexpected twists. Wheels cannot go straight; they must bend to the guides of destiny and terrain.

Carson smiled, dropped the scalp in the dusty road, and sent his horse forward on the trail of the future. He had found himself, Kit Carson, at last.

THE END



PLAN 27-A

PROGRESS, backed by legislative action, brought to the New York State police a lusty infant formally called the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, and promptly dubbed by the newspapers "Scotland Yard."

Stripped of much official wordage, this meant that each troop was to have a unit of men operating in plain clothes, who would specialize on the solution of major crimes, and be relieved of routine patrol duty. Promotions to the new unit were made on the basis of competitive examinations. The necessary increase in personnel was supplied by recruiting.

The Black Horse Troop took all this in its stride, amid some growling from Captain Charles Field, commanding officer, who declared:

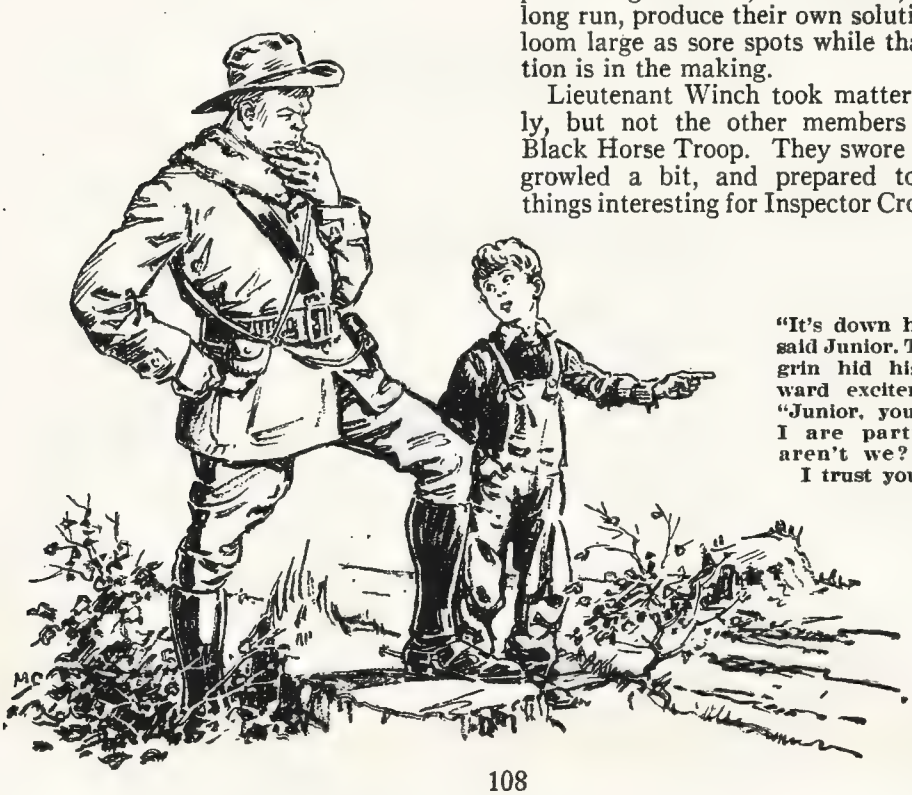
"Nothing new. Just checking up on unsolved cases, and keeping after them until you break them. We always did that."

Despite his assertion, however, things were happening. Sergeant John King, high man in the examination for which all sergeants were eligible, was commissioned as a lieutenant, and assigned to the new unit. Other lesser places were quickly and satisfactorily filled. All that was as it should be, and even the defeated candidates admitted that the successful men rated the promotions.

Then the three lieutenants of the troop, with the exception of the newly commissioned Mr. King, tackled the examination for the post of inspector, and head of the new unit in the troop. Lieutenant Joseph Winch was high man, and his average was above the mark obtained by several men who received the like appointment in other troops. That too was as it should be. But then the blow fell.

Lieutenant Jonas Crossbeth, a downstate product, was commissioned as an inspector, and assigned to head the Scotland Yard unit of the Black Horse Troop. This was just one of those things which happen now and then in almost every police organization, and which, in the long run, produce their own solution, but loom large as sore spots while that solution is in the making.

Lieutenant Winch took matters calmly, but not the other members of the Black Horse Troop. They swore a little, growled a bit, and prepared to make things interesting for Inspector Crossbeth.



"It's down here," said Junior. Tiny's grin hid his inward excitement. "Junior, you and I are partners, aren't we? Can I trust you?"

A swift-moving story of Tiny David and the State Police.

By ROBERT R. MILL

They were not acquainted with the gentleman, but they were very sure they wouldn't like him. He might be a good policeman; there was a chance that he might be a swell fellow. That mattered not at all. Even then they would not like him. For the Black Horse Troop, as many men in many stations of life have learned to their sorrow, is a close corporation.

Inspector Crossbeth pleased them by getting off on the wrong foot almost from the minute of his arrival. He had taken courses in criminology and crime-prevention at a leading university. He was willing, nay eager, to tell about it. He had studied police methods in Europe. His conversation included what were intended to be casual references to high officials and places abroad, with all of which, his listeners gathered, Mr. Crossbeth was quite familiar. The new arrival, unlike the majority of the men about him, found openly expressed pleasure in the fact that his unit was known as Scotland Yard.

THESE facts, which became known in less than two hours, were reported to Lieutenant James Crosby, who at once retired to his room. When he emerged, he wore a soft hat, the brim of which had been squeezed into two points, and which was worn with one point forward, and one point aft: Mr. Crosby's face was adorned with a large pipe. Clutched in his right hand was a magnifying-glass, through which he peered at the spotless surface of the table in the living-room.

Behind Mr. Crosby, watching him with keen and admiring interest, slouched Lieutenant Edward David, the largest man in the troop, and therefore known as Tiny.

Mr. Crosby gave a hoarse cry of triumph: "Dust! Just as I suspected."

"Remarkable!" said Mr. David.

Out in the hall, Mr. Crossbeth buttonholed Sergeant Henry Linton.

"Who are they?" he demanded.

Mr. Linton watched the performance for a full minute before he replied:

"Look like *Sherlock Holmes* and *Dr. Watson* to me, sir."

Illustrated by Monte Crews

Mr. Crossbeth's face darkened. "I asked you who they are, Sergeant."

"Yes sir. *Sher*—that is, the one with the glass is Lieutenant Crosby. *Doc*—the other one is Lieutenant David. Not bad chaps—for lieutenants."

Mr. Crossbeth made a mental note.

"And what is your name?" he asked.

"Sergeant Linton, sir."

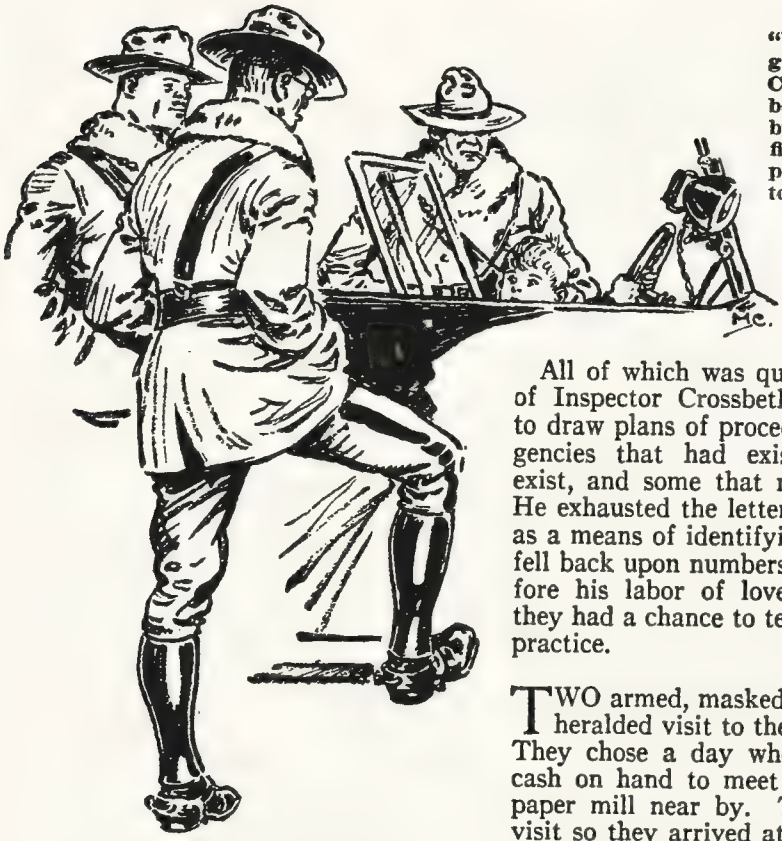
"I'll remember that."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Crossbeth retired to the inner office. He passed most of his time there for the next two weeks, and not without tangible results. From his facile mind and pen there flowed forth a series of plans of procedure to be followed in the event of almost every major crime in almost every section of the troop's territory.

The men of the Black Horse Troop chuckled. There was nothing wrong with the plans. In fact, virtually the same procedure had been followed in the same circumstances for years. In the past, however, when a patrol was sent to a strategic point, it had not been deemed necessary to give the said patrol written orders to be on the alert, and to remain there until relieved.

Mr. Crossbeth, however, produced each plan as if it were a child of his own brain and heart. He commented upon the plans at length, studding the conversation with references to his own experience and knowledge. He calmly ascribed the lack of enthusiasm, and even interest, on the part of his listeners to ignorance. He wrote off their



"Where did they go?" demanded Crossbeth. The boy's lips quivered, but his voice was firm. "He's my partner, and he told me not to tell."

failure to take any interest, outwardly, in their work, and their failure to cite any accomplishments of their own, under the same heading.

Mr. Crossbeth was a product of city streets. These men, regardless of their origin, had seen service in mountain country and on lonely roads. Nature can be a powerful ally, or a dread enemy. In either rôle she is impressive enough to keep the men who match wits with her rather humble. So the men of the Black Horse Troop, who had met the test, took certain things for granted. Sooner or later, on their patrols, you were bound to meet plenty of trouble. You stood up to it, or you didn't come out alive. But if you did come out, why talk about it?

These men studied. They wanted to advance as much as anybody. They tucked textbooks in saddlebags, and carried them on long, lonely patrols. But why parade your knowledge? Nearly all of them had distinguished themselves by acts performed quite outside the limits of duty. They were prepared to work right through any emergency with no reference to food or sleep. Their officers knew it. So why go around shouting about it?

All of which was quite over the head of Inspector Crossbeth, who continued to draw plans of procedure for all emergencies that had existed, that might exist, and some that never could exist. He exhausted the letters of the alphabet as a means of identifying the plans, and fell back upon numbers. Then, even before his labor of love was completed, they had a chance to temper theory with practice.

TWO armed, masked men paid an unheralded visit to the bank in Notnac. They chose a day when the bank had cash on hand to meet the payroll of a paper mill near by. They timed their visit so they arrived at the bank during the noon hour, when a girl cashier was the lone employee on duty. Only one customer troubled them, and he was quickly disposed of. They departed, richer by twelve thousand dollars, amid warnings they would shoot the first person who attempted pursuit.

The Black Horse Troop learned of this when Top Sergeant Max Payton received a telephone call from an excited resident of Notnac, who had seen the bandits run from the bank with a bag stuffed with currency, and climb into an automobile. This good citizen had taken refuge in his own car, and when the bandit car proceeded south on the main road, he had followed at a discreet distance, giving up the chase because of a blowout.

Sergeant Payton jotted down a fairly good description of the two men, a complete description of the car and its license number, and then went to work. The bell on the teletype machine sounded its call to action.

"Attention all stations!"

Briefly and rapidly Sergeant Payton flashed the necessary information. He was still at work when Inspector Crossbeth appeared at his shoulder.

"What is it, Sergeant?"

Sergeant Payton told him. Mr. Crossbeth darted to the inner office. He returned carrying numerous pieces of cardboard, which he shuffled rapidly.

"Wait a minute. . . . Here it is—yes." He peered at the bit of cardboard. "Plan 27-A, Sergeant."

Mr. Payton continued with the description of the car.

"Never mind that, Sergeant! Order Plan 27-A put into effect at once."

Mr. Payton tapped the keys:

"Plan 27-A goes into effect at once."

He waited until Mr. Crossbeth departed for the garage, bound for the scene of action. Then he added:

"By order of Inspector Crossbeth."

That accomplished, Sergeant Payton continued the description of the car. He was joined by Captain Field, who asked:

"Got a copy of Plan 27-A?"

"Yes sir," said Sergeant Payton, who produced it.

Captain Field inspected the plan with interest.

"Everything is all right," was his final verdict. "He included an order to apprehend the suspects, if located. I was afraid he might have forgotten it."

Mr. Payton decided the occasion warranted some liberties.

"Tiny David and Jim Crosby should be down in that section. Just where will they fit in on this Plan 27-A business, Skipper?"

"They have no assigned station," declared Captain Field. "Therefore they have an outside chance of getting within speaking distance of those two babies. That," he added, as he departed for his office, "is why I am not worrying."

MESSRS. David and Crosby, journeying from Albany to the barracks, pulled up before the sub-station in Deerville, five miles north of Notnac, shortly before one in the afternoon.

"Linny!" they bawled in unison.

Sergeant Linton appeared on the porch.

"Fed your face yet?" asked Mr. David.

"Nope," said Linton. "And the way I feel right now, I don't care if I never eat."

Mr. Crosby went into action:

"Outside of your conscience, what's troubling you?"

Mr. Linton lowered his voice:

"It's that misbeguided rookie they gave me as a partner. He gets dumber and dumber. Told him to get the car from the garage, and he rams a pine tree. Three hours for repairs. I wish he had listened to his old man, and become a shoe-clerk."

"Did you report the car out of service?" asked Mr. David.

"Well, no," Mr. Linton admitted. "He's young, and you know how they are about things like that over at the barracks."

"In that case," cut in Mr. Crosby, "who pays for said repairs?"

Mr. Linton appeared annoyed, even angry.

"He can't pay for it, because he has only had two paydays. You know how it—"

"In that case," declared Mr. David, "the very least we can do is buy your lunch. Get your hat, and a thumbtack to keep it on with."

AS Mr. Linton entered the building, presumably in search of the hat and thumbtack, Messrs. David and Crosby followed, engaged in spirited debate. Mr. David was inclined to believe their social position was so secure they could afford to be seen in public with Mr. Linton. Mr. Crosby was doubtful. Mr. Linton named a certain place where he hoped they both would be seen.

The clanging of the teletype bell silenced the exchange. They gathered about the machine. The message began to come through.

Mr. Linton whistled softly.

"That's nice," he murmured.

They all produced paper and pencil, as if in response to some unspoken command, and began to jot down the information. Suddenly the clicking of the keys ceased, pausing in the middle of a sentence. Then the keys resumed the message.

"You will be pleased to know," said Mr. Crosby, with heavy sarcasm, "that Plan 27-A now is in effect. That relieves you from all future thinking."

Mr. David turned to Mr. Linton.

"Where is your station on that plan?"

Mr. Linton snorted with scorn.

"The job was pulled south of here. That should put me on the south end of the village, along the main road. But we better check it. Plan 27-A looks just like 3347-Z to me."

"And while we are checking it," put in Mr. Crosby, "somebody should get word to the bandits that 27-A is in effect. Otherwise, they might not know,

"Do you want me to kill you?" Tiny David called. The reply was lurid and punctuated by shots.

and might do something Lord Barrelhead didn't include in the plan."

"What are you going to use for a car?" Mr. David asked Mr. Linton.

"Yours," said Mr. Linton hopefully. "If I don't, I see a lot of walking ahead of me. And I doubt if any of the places will have jobs open."

"Come on!" called Tiny David.

They drove to the appointed station. After an hour of checking passing cars, Mr. Crosby showed signs of mutiny.

"The report said they headed south. The smart thing for us to do would be to cruise in that direction, not letting anything get by us, but working down to where we might be able to do something besides pestering the public."

Mr. David voted in the negative.

"Plan 27-A calls for us to stay here."

"All this," declared Mr. Crosby, "is plain damn' foolishness. These two babies belong to some smart downstate mob. They cased the joint, found out about the pay-roll, and when the dame would be alone. Soon as they pulled the job, they made tracks for home. If the patrols below got set in time, they'll nab them. As long as we hang around here, we are just warts on the nose of progress. And say, does that plan make any reference to eating?"

TINY DAVID jerked a thumb at a lunch-room near by.

"Hop over there, and tie the bag on. Pass up the eight-course item in favor of something speedy. Take Linny with you. I can hold down the fort. I'll yell if I need you."

Traffic was comparatively light, with pauses between cars. Word of the robbery had gone out by radio, and a little audience gathered at some distance from the troop-car.

From out of the crowd walked a boy of perhaps six or seven.

"Hello."

"Hello. What's your name?"

"Huck."

"Is that short for *Huckleberry?*"

"Yep."

"Huckleberry pie?"

"Naw. Say, don't you read? Short for *Huckleberry Finn.*"

"Good enough," declared Tiny David.

"My real name's Junior," the youngster volunteered.

"I see. What are you going to be when you grow up?"

"A trooper."

"Why?"

"Want to put people in jail."

"The idea has merit," Tiny David admitted.

"What?" The boy tugged at the door of the troop car. Tiny David opened it.

"Want to get in?"

"Is it okay?"

"Sure," said Tiny David.

The boy seated himself behind the wheel. He fumbled for the gear-shift.

"Don't drive too fast," Tiny David warned, keeping his face very serious.

"Nope."

The trooper walked away from the car to stop an automobile approaching from the north. He checked an exclamation as he walked forward. Inspector Crossbeth was driving. A newspaper reporter was at his side.

"Any luck?" asked the reporter as the car halted.

Tiny David grinned.

"Yes—they didn't head this way."

Mr. Crossbeth glared at him. "What's that kid doing in that car?"

Tiny David's smile became broader.

"Junior? He's driving about ninety miles an hour, and pulling closer to the bandits every minute. He has his gun on the seat beside him, and he's all ready to shoot it out with them. How about it, Junior?"

"You bet!"

Mr. Crossbeth noted a sympathetic smile on the face of the reporter, and turned his attention to other things.

"Where's Linton? Is Crosby with you?"

Messrs. Linton and Crosby, whose attention had been attracted by the commotion that attended the arrival of the car, answered both questions by boiling

out of the lunch-room. Mr. Crosby, who believed in preparedness, had a large slice of fried ham, which he endeavored to fold between two slices of bread.

Words failed Mr. Crossbeth for only an instant.

"Suppose that car came along—" he began.

"In that case," Mr. Crosby interrupted, "I would drop the ham."

Mr. Crossbeth shifted the attack.

"Get that kid out of the car."

"Me?" asked Junior.

"Stay where you are, Junior," Tiny David ordered. "That car," he informed Crossbeth, "is assigned to me. Until it is taken from me, I'll decide who gets in it."

"You won't have it long," Mr. Crossbeth promised. His car got under way, headed south. "All of you will hear from this."

"He sounds sore," said Junior.

MESSRS. Linton and Crosby reëntered the lunch-room, but emerged a short time later.

"Try the ham," Mr. Linton advised. "And don't stint yourself. This may be your last meal on the State. His Grace, Duke Imalouse, seems rather upset."

"Come along, Junior," said Tiny David. "I can't eat without my partner."

There was a pause while Junior mentally weighed the car against ice-cream.

"You bet!"

They seated themselves at a table in the rear, a great hulk of a man, who gazed with amused good nature at a wisp of a lad, who returned his glance with blind hero-worship. They worked their way through to dessert.

"Can I drive some more?" asked Junior.

"Sure," said Tiny David. "You are good at it. You must have had a lot of practice."

"Yes."

"Does your dad have a car?"

"My dad's—dead."

"That's tough, Junior. So is mine." Tiny David sought to change the subject. "Where did you practice driving?"

"On a car in the woods back of my house?"

"A car in the woods," Tiny David repeated. "Is it an old car?"

"Nope. It's a swell car."

"Who owns it?"

"I dunno."

"How long has it been there?"

"Oh, not long—a day or two. Ted and I found it when we were playing Indian."

"Could you take me there?"

"You bet!"

"This is our secret, Junior. We don't want other people butting in, do we?"

"Nope."

"All right. We will duck out the back way, so nobody will see us, and go take a look at your car."

Tiny David paid the check, and they departed by the rear door. Junior led the way over several back-yards to a dirt road, which branched off from the main road. Soon the dirt-road entered a woods.

"How far is it, Junior?"

"Not so far."

They moved on and on, the sturdy legs of the country boy moving tirelessly as they attempted to keep pace with the long strides of the man. Tiny David estimated they had covered almost a mile when the boy examined the foliage on one side of the road.

They burst through the leaves, which blocked the entrance, and emerged on what evidently was an abandoned lumber-road.

"It's down here," said Junior.

Tiny David came to a halt. He lowered his voice:

"Junior, if we kept going on the other road, where would we come out?"

"Gee, I dunno." The boy pondered. "Yes, I do. Uncle Jim used to use that road to haul apples to a cider-mill way the other side of Notnac."

Tiny David's grin hid his inward excitement. His hunch might be wrong, but he was banking on it.

"Junior, you and I are partners, aren't we?"

"You bet!" The boy's eyes sparkled.

Tiny David produced paper and pencil and scribbled a hasty note:

I am going in to a car in the woods. Have a hunch the bank mob parked it there and will double back to it. Leave your car where it is. Have Junior lead you to the beginning of a lumber road. Then send him home. You both come along that road until you find me, but take it easy.

Tiny David gave the note to the boy.

"Get back to the village as soon as you can, Junior. Give that note to the troopers. Don't give it to anybody else, and don't tell anybody about it. Can I trust you?"

The boy hesitated.

"Y-e-s. But where are you going?"

Tiny David decided on frankness.

"I am going after your car, Junior. I may have some work to do there. If I get it done, I'll let you drive the car—really drive it."

"Gosh! How about me helping you with the work?"

"No," Tiny David ruled. "You can help me a lot more by doing a quick job with that note. How about it, Junior?"

"Okay!" The boy was off.

Tiny David watched him out of sight, then made his way forward along the lumber-road. After he had gone a short distance he knelt and examined the grass. He found two sets of automobile tire-tracks. One was faint, the other fresh.

The trooper continued along the road. He walked with the noiseless tread of the woodsman, keeping close to the foliage at one side of the trail, and moving along with a speed, silence and even grace strangely at variance with his size.

HE could not yet see the car when the sound of a human voice caused him to freeze in his tracks. The voice came from his right.

Tiny David entered the woods, and made his way forward slowly, heading toward the sound. Soon he was able to see one car. He took another step forward, using heavy foliage as a screen. Two cars were visible. The trooper took stock of the situation.

One car—it had been pushed to one side, and was almost hidden by branches—answered the description of the automobile used in the bank-robbery. Tiny David twisted a bit and obtained a view of the license-plate. The number was the one that had gone out over the teletype. The second car was parked in foliage at one side of the lumber-road. It was an open roadster, a sporty job, and evidently the car Junior had discovered while playing in the woods.

Two men were seated in the roadster. They wore the garb of hunters, complete to the last detail. Even the buttons of their hunting-licenses were to be seen in their hatbands.

TINY DAVID smiled grimly; he saw it all now: It was a clever plan. He should have seen the contradiction at the start. He swore silently as he remembered they all had been too busy with Plan 27-A to think of much else.

The bank-robbery had been perfectly planned, and perfectly executed—obviously the work of professionals. The get-away, on the contrary, had been clumsy. A blundering citizen had been able to follow the car, obtain a complete description of it, even down to the license-number, and report which way it was headed.

All that, Tiny David realized, had been part of the careful plan. The bandits wanted that car to be the object of a search. They knew it would be off the main road before the patrols could get in position. Now, back at the spot where they had hidden the second car, and changes of clothing, they were waiting for the chase to die down a bit. Then two hunters, dressed entirely differently from the bandits, and driving a car totally unlike the bandit car, would appear on the main road north of Deerville and, Tiny David guessed, drive north, rather than south, where they had decoyed the search.

It was clever. Tiny David admitted it to himself. Only a small boy, who responded to kindness, and unburdened himself of his youthful confidences, had blocked it. The trooper amended that thought. It wasn't blocked yet. But Junior had given him a gambling chance of blocking it.

The man at the wheel of the roadster turned to his companion.

"How about it?"

Tiny David moved forward.

"Why not?" hazarded the second bandit. "What can we lose?"

The driver chuckled.

"Just two honest hunters." There was the whine of a starter. "Going home after a day in the woods."

Tiny David straightened.

"Stick them up!" he ordered. As he spoke, he leaped to one side.

A revolver shot acted as a period to the command, and a bullet clipped

Tiny David grinned. "He is a sour-looking dog, Junior, but he really likes little boys."

through the leaves where the trooper had been standing. Tiny David fired into the radiator of the roadster, and then sent a second bullet at the seat. He saw the driver slump forward.

The trooper leaped behind the trunk of a tree. He was just in time. A bullet whizzed by him.

The second bandit threw himself below the windshield and continued to fire. Tiny David replaced the two exploded cartridges.

"Do you want me to kill you?" he called.

The reply was lurid. It was punctuated with shots.

Tiny David's jaws tightened. He fired once, twice. He heard a groan, and pulled his revolver upward.

"You've killed me!" came the cry.

"You sound healthy," retorted Tiny David. He started forward warily. "I am coming to you. Try any funny business, and I *will* kill you."

He reached the side of the roadster. The driver was unconscious. There was a hole in the shoulder of his coat. His companion clutched an arm, and moaned with pain.

"You'll live!" snapped Tiny David. "Your pal won't, unless we get him somewhere they are able to stop that bleeding."

He disarmed both men. Then he listened intently along the trail.

"Jim!" he called.

"Coming, Tiny!" roared the voice of Jim Crosby.

They made short work of transferring the bandits to the car they had used in the robbery. In the rumble-seat of the roadster they found a sack filled with money.

They pushed the automobile into the road. Linton drove. Tiny David and Crosby remained with the prisoners in the rear.

"Hospital or morgue?" asked Linton.

Tiny David bent over the bandit.

"Hospital," he said.

They approached the main road.

"Think you can handle them?" Tiny David asked Crosby.

"Sure. What do you have on?"

"Stop here," Tiny David ordered. He jumped to the ground. "Have to look up my partner."

Crosby chuckled. "You'll find him in the car. He must have it up to ninety-five by now."

As Tiny David walked south along the main road, he saw a small crowd gathered about the car. Tiny David glanced over the shoulders.

Junior sat firmly entrenched behind the wheel. Standing beside the car, with one foot on the running-board, stood Inspector Crossbeth, who did not look happy. Behind him stood Captain Field, who looked rather amused.

"Where did they go?" demanded Inspector Crossbeth.

"I won't tell!"

Captain Field tried his hand.

"Why won't you tell, sonny?"

The boy's lips quivered, but his voice was firm:

"He's my partner, and he told me not to tell."

Tiny David stepped forward.

"Hello, partner."

He seized the boy, pulled him from behind the wheel, and gathered him up in his big arms.

"Meet Junior, Captain. He's one of the best partners I ever worked with."

He rapidly explained what had happened.

"They didn't include Junior in 27-A, Captain," he concluded, "but we better put him in all the other plans."

Inspector Crossbeth cleared his throat.

"You say these men are at the hospital?"

"Yep."

"I'll go over and take statements from them."

"Swell idea," said Captain Field.

When Crossbeth was out of earshot, the Captain turned to Tiny David.

"Heard from Albany just before I left the barracks. Crossbeth goes back downstate, and Winch takes over."

"Was Major Harner sore?" asked Tiny David.

Captain Field chuckled.

"He was sort of disappointed in you. Said he had counted on you to take the rough edges off Crossbeth, and make a real officer out of him. When he gets the full report, he may be satisfied."

"Thanks to Junior," said Tiny David.

"How about my car?" demanded the boy. "And how about that ride? You said I could really drive."

Tiny David grinned. "That's right, Junior. But your car needs a bit of fixing. Will mine do?"

"You bet!"

"All right; you can sit on my lap and drive." He turned to Captain Field. "Come along, sir?"

They climbed into the front seat.

"Where to?" asked Tiny David.

"Junior's house," said Captain Field. "I want to talk to his mother."

"Is he going to tell on me?" demanded the boy.

"Yes," said Captain Field. "I am going to tell your mother what the banker told me he'd do if anybody caught the men who stole some money from him."

"What does he mean?" asked the boy.

Tiny David grinned. "Nothing to worry about, Junior. He is a sour-looking dog, but he really does like little boys." He rumpled the tow head pressed against his chest. His voice was a growl: "He likes them almost as much as I do. Shall we cut him in as a partner?"

"Okay," said Junior.

Another lively story by Robert Mill will appear in an early issue.

ONE

Editor's Note: "Kioga of the Wilderness" left its hero and his friends still lost from us in far Nato'wa. An expedition has sailed to their rescue; but while we await its return, let us enjoy these new stories of Kioga's boyhood, told by him to his friend Dr. James Munro during the Snow Hawk's sojourn in America.

IN far Nato'wa—that new-found land within the Arctic Circle—deep in the still, primeval forest called by the redskinned natives Indegara, there stands a great rock called Chieftain's Head, supposed to be the image of Mialoka, legendary First-Chief of all the Shoni tribes. When the eyes of Chieftain's Head light up, Two-Star, the little son of Mialoka, will return to take his place among mortal men, so goes the legend, implicitly believed among the Shoni.

Below this rock, towering sentrylike a hundred feet above the neighboring forest, three rushing rivers meet. Their meeting-place is known as the Caldrons of the Yei, a name which well describes

Against a Wilderness

A thrill-crammed adventure of Kioga, the Snow Hawk—a white boy reared among the natives of a new-found volcano-warmed forest north of Siberia.

By WILLIAM CHESTER

Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon

the foamy chaos into which the mingling rivers churn each other. Two of these rivers are glacier-born; the third springs from its sources boiling, heated by volcanic fires; and where hot and frigid waters meet, there hangs above the Caldrons a pillar of dense gray mist.

Little is known of this lone, unearthly place, reverberant with the hollow roar of waters through the scoured-out caves which honeycomb its rim. But of one thing the Shoni witch-doctors long were certain: Human bodies, of enemy or village-sacrifice, consigned to the Caldrons, were never seen again. The hungry Yei—mythical spirits of the rivers—ate them, so the Indians believed.

What the Caldrons finally discard at their southern edges is sucked into the vortex of a mighty cataract beyond, then smashed and swept into eternity . . . For centuries no human foot had ever pressed this place of peril, nor human eye looked on its inner mysteries and returned to tell of what it saw. . . .

One day, not many years ago, somewhere between Hopeka and the Caldrons of the Yei, a forest denizen stood belly-deep, fishing in the Hiwasi River. More clown than fisherman, the great brown bear leaped among the shining salmon arrowing upstream to their spawning-beds.

Not once in fifty times did his swinging claw-armed paw hook out a shim-

mering fish. More often the clumsy bruin missed, and fairly stood upon his head amid the silvery horde.

From somewhere near the brush-grown bank a peal of care-free laughter echoed forth. The bruin's small red eyes turned toward the sound, beholding in the shadows a familiar human figure, of a youth of perhaps fifteen. In one strong hand he grasped a pointed chipping-stone, and in the other a half-finished arrow-head, one edge cunningly sharpened, the other still quite dull. Pausing in his primitive task, he laughed again.

Discomfited, perhaps, the bear regained his poise, reared up, and with a sudden lucky pass scooped a big salmon high in air, batting it fiercely toward the bank before it fell.

By sheerest chance the salmon hurtled toward the standing figure. Quick as the flick of sparrow's wing the supple youth dodged, twisting to one side. But for all his haste the writhing fish got in one flat resounding blow, delivered stingingly. The outline of a salmon's tail glowed redly on a brown bare hip.

Much hurt and out of dignity,—of which the middle teens may have great store,—the figure leaped down upon the flopping fish, which got away. Then belated self-command ensued. He turned back to the bank. Standing,—by painful preference,—he meditated on the perils of his wilderness.

The feathers of the Snow Hawk—or Kioga, to call him by his Shoni name—were ruffled. Aki, his wild companion, was laughing at him silently, if expression meant anything at all. High on the bank, with lolling tongue, a fox grinned down on him. Kioga flung a stick—and missed the mark. All things went wrong this day! Again he stood straight and silent as the trees beyond him.

TALL for his fifteen years, already Kioga gave promise of the man he was to be. Lithe and graceful, with long leopard-muscles, he almost matched a full-grown warrior in strength. In quickness and agility, he far excelled the practiced wrestlers and runners of the Shoni tribes—a nation of athletes.

Eager to forget his earlier embarrassment, Kioga plunged forthwith into the river. For a while he wrestled and gamboled with his friendly partner the bear. As if born and existing only to guard him from harm, time and again the huge brute dragged him bodily upon the bank. And soon Kioga forgot his earlier uncomfortable experience in the excitement of diving to elude his burly companion. In the liquid element the lad Kioga was as adept, and elusive, almost, as the salmon. Aki was no match for such tactics.

SO for an hour amusement crowded all other thoughts from his mind. Suddenly Kioga felt the bruin stiffen, nostrils twitching toward upstream. Kioga too, chin-deep in water, grew still, clutching Aki's shaggy coat. Presently his own nostrils, little less sharp than his wild companion's, caught the scent of smoke-tanned garments, worn on the backs of men.

"Come, Aki!" whispered Kioga urgently, pressing the rough shoulder. If not in true obedience, then solely to be with him, the bear swam quietly ashore. The Snow Hawk, still hanging on, went with him, without an effort.

Then from below the bank two pairs of watchful eyes observed a tall canoe move into their line of vision. On the forward seat a withered dried-up figure sat—Inkato the shaman, famed and feared for the power of his magic. Hideous with self-mutilation, he sat with scarce a movement, only his glittering eyes denying him to be a mummy.

Behind Inkato a slim boy about ten years old sat pale-faced, with eyes of fear, thongs binding arms behind him immovably.

Astern a lesser shaman propelled the craft downriver, and when the captive struggled, struck him callously with the flat of the paddle.

Watching through slitted lids, behind which the greenish eyes blazed like melting emeralds, the Snow Hawk growled back in his throat. And on a deeper, gruffer note the brute beside him did the same—Kioga's foes were Aki's too.

Well Kioga knew where and to what fate the youthful victim went. For one black mark stands against the Seven Tribes. Whereas their music and arts are things to marvel at, the age-old custom of human sacrifice still survives.

But a wrinkle of perplexity deepened between Kioga's eyes. On some pretext or other, the shamans had decreed death for this unlucky captive. But why such unaccustomed secrecy? Why no chants, no beat of drums, no myriad witnesses to the high ceremony of human sacrifice? Ofttimes before his keen young eyes had seen the hapless victim knifed and hurled headlong into the churning waters

Watching, the Snow Hawk growled; on a deeper note the brute did the same.

—but never in such furtive fashion. Always the village witch-doctors had been on hand in full grotesque regalia.

Clearly something was afoot, something too dark and dread, almost, to think about, if all the other village shamans were not supposed to know of it.

The canoe passed near the recent playspot. The victim's eyes turned momentarily shoreward, as if seeking a way of escape in that direction. The quickness of his indrawn breath sent the eyes of Inkato also shoreward. With a start he hissed back to his assistant: "Kansa! Saw you some one disappearing in the bush?"

"I glimpsed a bear," said the other.

"No human leg with fish-tail mark upon it?" persisted Inkato.

"Not so. Perhaps I looked too late."

"My lying eyes betrayed me," muttered the old shaman uneasily. "But there is no time to lose. The Yei are hungry. Push on!"

Behind him the luckless little captive slumped lower, stoicism crushed by fear of death.

Push on the second shaman did, until the mighty millrace just above the Caldrons came into view. On either side black basalt walls reared up, cracked and broken. Ahead, the pall of mist above the Caldrons eddied densely, shrouds-to-be of the Shoni boy.

"Now!" came Inkato's voice, instinct with cruelty. With a quick swing, Kansa flung the victim overside, holding the prey afloat while the older shaman crept back with keen knife drawn.

Up went the corded old hand, the bone blade gleaming.

Then suddenly something pale, oval and speckled—the great egg of an emperor goose—hurtled from above. The wielder of the knife shrank back—too late! The half-pound egg, too long unhatched, burst hard against his temple, its evil-smelling contents spattering, and streaming down Inkato's grimacing face.

To the hurler of that egg, the boyish victim's face was not unknown. He was a lad from Hopeka—the name escaped Kioga—recently stricken dumb when lightning struck near where he stood.

Startled, the younger shaman released his grip. Caught in the currents, the bound body was drawn beyond his reach. With eyes of fury Inkato watched it go.

"No matter," he muttered finally. "The Yei take them dead or alive. And they return no sacrifice. Back, careless fool! The current pulls us!"

And Inkato, himself fearful of the death he meted out so casually to others,

"Kansa!" hissed Inkato. "Saw you some one disappearing in the bush?"

seized a paddle, forgetful even of the stench which hung about his head. A moment later, mouthing malediction on the mother of that pungent egg, the two were gone upstream, their ends achieved, so far as they could know.

But Inkato was wrong: Whereas the river-Yei had swallowed up the victim, they did not quite digest the mouthful.

Near where the mists were swirling, a second body struck the surface like a flying lance, glancing deeply. Beside the unconscious sacrifice a head appeared. Its owner might have been a river-Yei in person, up from the depths to claim the slender body; for around one strong fist the younger lad's braid was twisted.

A moment, his supple strength against the coiling sinews of three mighty rivers, Kioga fought the currents. Alone he might have had a chance, as does the reed that bends before a hurricane. But encumbered thus, the waters had their way with him.

Tenacity, however, was in his fiber. The will to survive blazed with a fierce white flame—else he had never lived this long. His grip upon that braid tightened in a hold that only death would slacken. And in his dire extremity, one single name escaped him, loud as healthy lungs could shout it out:

"Aki! *Aki!* Aki!"

A momentary hush ensued, broken only by the sound of rushing waters. Then came a roar like rolling thunder, a splash close by as if a ton of rock had fallen, and a great wave covered Kioga and his burden. When shaggy fur came beneath his hand, the Snow Hawk clutched it, clinging like a limpet.

Now vast primordial strength was laboring for him—five hundred pounds of solid buoyant brawn, delivering power through four thrusting paws. Gasping stertorously, the bear obliquely stemmed the hungry eddies, slowly neared the carved-out caves.

Dragged coughing to the surface, Kioga caught a breath of air. He had but one thought, to keep his hold on that dark braid and on Aki; only one command to utter fiercely through clenched teeth: "Swim, Aki—*swim!*"

The loyal, selfless heart, already pumping near to bursting, responded, drawing on unknown reserves of power. Seeming hours were but minutes. The thrashing claws scraped bottom, gripped, hooked onto stone, and held. Then surging mightily, Aki dragged himself ashore.

Kioga felt his grip loosening, and again the currents struggled to possess him. Then the patient bruin did him violence, taking one forearm in gin-trap jaws and dragging him for the hundredth time to solid ground—and with Kioga came that other limp, shackled body.

KIOGA came to, consciousness rising from a sea of pain. A warm moist roughness licked soothingly across his naked chest. A hot breath thawed his tense and rigid muscles. He saw a vast dark shape bulking huge beside him, and rose up spent and trembling, his first thought for the one he had rescued.

Beside Kioga, at full stretch, the body lay without a movement. The Snow Hawk wore no knife, nor aught else either; but with a chip of stone he sawed through the leather cords, loosened the boy's apparel, and began to chafe the victim back to life.

Swift moments passed; the rescued one showed signs of life. A ray of pale auroral light came through the opening of the cave and fell upon a thin wan face, colored slightly with returning blood—a face of innocence, marked by an ugly bruise on one temple.

More gently now Kioga chafed anew, luring the boy back to consciousness. And as he worked, his eyes narrowed; amazement, resentment, anger grew within him—then black and bitter hatred of those who had worked this crime against a helpless child.

THE common bond of youth made that offense seem greater. Until this hour Kioga had loathed the brethren who devised such acts of horror—but with a detached and general kind of loathing. Face to face with dread reality, his hatred crystallized and sought some one on whom to fasten. He thought of the two who had brought the sacrifice downriver—old Inkato and Kansa, his confederate.

"They fed the Yei in secret," he muttered hotly, devising a thousand mental tortures for the guilty pair. "I wonder why? But they'll pay! Blood for thy blood, little brother!"

What the rousing sacrifice thought, waking in that reverberant cave to see a bloody figure crouched above him and a dripping bear near by, can not be known. If fear, Kioga sought to calm it.

"Be not afraid," he shouted in Shoni, above the roar of waters. "None may do you hurt while I am near. I am Kioga—the outcast of Hopeka!"

Then wasting no time on further useless talk, Kioga armed himself with a rock and explored about him, seeking means of egress from this cave-pierced shore of the Caldrons. Aki shuffled after him.

One ledge ended at a whirlpool. Above, sheer rock, slippery with condensing mist, offered no encouragement. The foam-capped waters—he had no wish to challenge them again! Returning, he found another route, along connecting caves, and passed from one to another in an upstream direction. Somewhere, soon, he thought, the area of the Caldrons must abut upon the neighboring forest. But the underground path he followed ended in a wall.

In disappointment he hurled his stone against it. Some slabs of rock, weakened by erosion, slid from the wall. He hurled the stone again; a threat of air, cool and dry, blew through from somewhere, bringing with it scent of pine and hemlock. Encouraged, Kioga hammered afresh, desisting only when his stone fell apart in his hands. With naked hands he tugged and strained. But for all his efforts, he had only made an opening large enough to get one hand through. One huge slab moved slightly. If that could only be moved a little more—

Behind him Aki sneezed with the sound as of a parting compressed-air coupling. Kioga jumped in surprise—but with a great idea dawning. Directing the bear's attention to the opening, "Smell, Aki!" he commanded. The brute sniffed eagerly, caught the scent of outer liberty and understood. Exerting all his strength, he pulled upon that slab. Kioga also pulled. With a rumble the slab fell inward. The way was clear.

A few minutes later Kioga carried the Shoni boy out, carefully concealing the new-made entrance to the Caldrons; for here was another retreat in time of peril.

GUARDED on his way by one no other wilderness brute dared face, Kioga moved north and westward through the forest labyrinths, never hesitating, though changing direction a hundred times.

From thicket, cave and deep ravine, eyes saw the little trio pass—eyes that were bright as heated coins, eyes like mirrors reflecting flame, many only curious, many more hot with hungry menace. The Shoni boy shivered in fear.

Kioga soothed him, bantering a little. "Fear not, little brother. Who dares molest Kioga and his friends? What is thy name?" he asked; then as he spoke he remembered that the boy was dumb. But to his surprise, the other answered:

"I am Ohali. My father is a chief. My brothers all are warriors."

"But you were dumb! I heard the shamans say it."

"When the river took me, I cried out. My voice came back."

"Why did the shamans give thee to the Yei?"

Ohali shivered. "I do not know. They seized me in the night. I struggled, but could not cry out."

A gust of fury swept Kioga afresh, tearing out this vow: "They'll pay! Before the sun and moon and all the stars, I swear it!"

"Where are we going? Back—where Inkato and Kansa are?"

Kioga heard the boy's teeth chatter. "Not so, little brother. While Inkato and Kansa live, you'll not be safe in all Hopeka. Yet since they did not kill thee, why should I kill them? There must be a better way. First we will rest and eat."

"Where do you live?" Ohali asked.

"Where once a tiger couched. That is Kioga's home."

In awe Ohali heard these words. "Who are you?"

Thoughtfully Kioga answered, putting into words dim thoughts, maturing ideals of youth at shining manhood's threshold: "I am a friend to all like thee, Ohali. I place small birds back in the nest. I kill no doe with young. I aid the weak, destroy the wicked strong and make them fear me. Hast ever heard of Robin Hood?"

"Ra-bin-hud?" echoed Ohali, repeating the English words with unaccustomed lips. Smiling, Kioga bade him forget the question.

"A friend of mine you would not know, Ohali."

Perplexed, the thin young arms, dark with the marks of cutting thongs, tightened round Kioga's neck. "I do not fear Kioga."

"Nor I the shamans," muttered Kioga. But Ohali heard him not. He was asleep.

PRESENTLY Kioga turned off the trail, climbed a steep narrow path to a point halfway up a frowning cliff. Pausing before a mat of growing vines, he pushed them aside, exposing a huge log door chinked with mud and mosses. Manipulating a latch, Kioga pushed in the door and entered, placing his burden gently on a pile of thick soft furs.

With curving stick and leather thong he kindled sparks and blew them into flame and made a fire. A veritable pirate's den, that cave, hung all about with bows and arrows, coils of leather rope, long whips that were the dread of every brute that prowled the forest, and many kinds of Indian garments, and hideous devil-masks.

One of the garments Kioga fastened round his waist with cord of buckskin. The slight demands of modesty thus satisfied, he went forth through the night again, returning in an hour, laden with nuts and berries and wild birds' eggs.

Upon the coals he set an earthen pot, filled with water from a rock-spring bubbling in the recesses of his cave: and into this flung quantities of dried meat and vegetables from his basket stores.

Then, beholding Ohali's tattered garments, from a leather case he pulled out fringed buckskin shirt and leggings of hide, cured soft and white, with moccasins to match—his own gala boy's attire, long since outgrown but treasured none the less, because a loved one's fingers had sewn upon them. These, with other ornaments he placed where Ohali must see them when he first awoke.

His body stretched to rest before the bubbling stew, Kioga pondered: How return Ohali to Hopeka without delivering him back into the hands of Inkato—who, one way failing, would find other means of persecuting the boy?

Still wrestling with that problem, Kioga slept—in utter weariness.

MEANWHILE, pulling for Hopeka town upon the Hiwasi River, Inkato had rested uneasily upon his paddle.

"A leg with fish-tail mark upon it—I cannot put that out of mind," he told his companion. "Let us go back and look along the shore. If it were known we did this thing—"

Then came Kansa's voice, guttural and deep: "What have we gained by this great risk? Because his father cursed you when his son was stricken dumb—was that cause enough to take Ohali's life?"

"We did not *take* a life," corrected Inkato, drawing a fine distinction. "We *gave* it—unto the Yei. You see things crookedly, O Kansa. I fear you will never be a famous shaman."

"What would our fellow-shamans say, learning that we did this secretly, without their knowledge?"

"How will they ever know—unless you babble, Kansa? Cease sniveling!"

Uneasily Kansa shook his head, pushing downstream toward the point where movement had earlier caught the older shaman's eye. When they had arrived, Inkato spoke.

"Go you ashore and look about. I will watch, with bow in hand, to see that no harm befalls you."

Kansa took up his spear and disembarked, scanning the bank on every hand. Then suddenly he straightened with a hiss. "The footprints of a bear, I see—

Eyes fastened upon the crown of Chieftain's Head. Suddenly, a cry: "The legend is come true! The eyes of Mialoka —they burn!"

and others, manlike but smaller than a warrior's."

"I knew it!" cried the old villain fiercely. "We were seen—and know you who made those tracks?"

Kansa shook his head, wondering at the other's agitation.

"Kioga!" snarled Inkato, the weapons quivering in his hand. "He who runs with the bears of Indegara!"

"Agh!" choked Kansa, his face losing color. "What if he saw us throw Ohali into the river!"

"That egg—I should have known!" remembered Inkato. "Back to the Caldrons, Kansa! Make haste! Methinks there is no good in this!"

The startled shamans returned to the scene of their outrage. And after searching long, they came upon fresher tracks, again of youth and bear together. One look at the human spoor, and Inkato stiffened. "He carried a burden. And look you, Kansa—all were wet. There's mud within the prints. And here—two smaller prints!"

"Ohali lives," muttered Kansa. "We are betrayed!"

Inkato shook his head defiantly. "Not yet, you shivering fool. Back to Hopeka—bend your paddle, Kansa, or it may be you will never bend it again!"

AWAKING in the cave, the first object Kioga's eyes fell upon was Ohali, standing straight and slender, clad all in new white buckskin, capped with crown of hawk-wing plumes, on either wrist a ruddy copper bracelet; and glittering and flashing in the firelight, fine beadwork upon his breast and back.

A spark of inspiration touched Kioga off.

"*Ahai!* I see the way!"

"What way?" demanded Ohali, puzzled by the words.

"The way to put Ohali beyond the reach of such as Inkato. Hast heard the legend, that when the eyes of Mialoka, the First Chief, are seen to burn, the son of Mialoka will return to dwell with living men?"

"*Ahi,*" answered Ohali, not understanding.

"You shall be Mialoka's son. The eyes of Mialoka will burn tomorrow night!"

Ohali had shivered at mention of the shaman Inkato. His poise was swiftly gone, and fear looked from his eyes.

Kioga's mind worked swiftly. Were it known what now he contemplated, all Shoni shaman-hood would work against him. Those less fanatic medicine-men who worked with roots and herbs and sought no power in primitive politics, would frown on his scheme. Even the common populace would restrain him.

But there was the measure of Kioga's peculiar daring. Half of his short young life had been an epic struggle—one against a wilderness. A lone hand held no terrors. His wits versus theirs—one brain against a hundred—would be no new experience.

He reprimanded Ohali swiftly. "Shrink not, little brother. Stand proud and straight. From this day forth, the greatest chiefs will do thee honor. Far and near thy fame will spread." And with the words, Kioga laughed aloud and said again: "The eyes of Mialoka will burn tomorrow night. And henceforward men will know Ohali as Two Star, son of the First Chief!"

Bewildered by this rapid flow of words, Ohali straightened once again. "How can this be?"

Pursing his lips and drawing in his cheeks grotesquely, Kioga spoke as Inkato was wont to boast: "I am Kioga, greatest of all magicians!" Then again he laughed outright, and Ohali laughed with him, scarcely knowing why, save that with Kioga near he could not long be fearful or unhappy.

When their meal was done, Kioga showed Ohali tricks of sleight-of-hand; and while Ohali sat entranced, squatted there before the little lad, telling funny tales to make him laugh, and drawing pictures on a buffalo-hide for Ohali's amusement—and for his own delight as well; for when Ohali's laughter bubbled up, Kioga listened raptly, as a long-deaf person might who heard a sudden note of flutelike music. Not often had Kioga human friend to share his solitude . . .

Sometimes, though, a shadow crossed Ohali's face—a face too young to bear such marks of haunting fear. Then pity filled the Snow Hawk's heart; and to erase the shadow, he called in Aki from his guard-post outside the door, and to the trill of Pan-pipes made Aki rear and dance, and bear Ohali on his shaggy shoulders.

All in all, it was a merry evening, ending far too soon in weariness. Ohali slept as never in his life before.

BANKING the fire, Kioga again quit the cave, then to the broad Hiwasi went, sought out his hidden bark canoe and on the central stronger current came swiftly toward Hopeka town. Hiding his canoe, Kioga neared the palisaded village afoot, gained secret ingress, and prowling the shadows of the long-houses came to the lodge of Inkato the shaman.

Listening, he heard no sound within. Entering stealthily—no lodge is ever barred among the Shoni—Kioga found a fire glowing, by whose light his darting gaze saw many things. Above the coals a cooking-vessel simmered, of which Kioga smelled, turning up his nose. To one side hung a bunch of shriveled berries—a violent medicine, whose attributes Kioga well remembered.

On a wicked impulse he flung these into the cooking-pot, adding also to the broth some other near-by ingredients, which the shamans never prescribed for themselves. Then stirring slowly, he sniffed again, adding more of this and that until the odor satisfied him by its vileness.

Hearing footsteps, he hastily retreated through a side entrance to the lodge and

hid himself outside, ear glued to the barken wall. Soon some one entered. He heard the lisp of Inkato's voice, speaking to a companion through toothless jaws.

"*Ehi-ehi!* A lucky thing we found their footprints. Tomorrow we will track them down with warriors from the village. All will think Kioga stole Ohali from the village. And when we come upon them, we will kill the Snow Hawk. And if," added the shaman meaningly, "Ohali is also killed, it will be by accident—will it not, Kansa—eh?"

"It will need doing quickly," answered Kansa darkly, "lest Ohali himself betray us."

"Then see you carry springy bow and sharp arrows. Leave Kioga to my spear."

OUTSIDE the lodge Kioga listened, missing not a word. Beyond doubt the shamans knew Ohali was still alive. If they had their way, he would bear the blame for the boy's kidnaping, and all his plans would go awry. To return and efface the trail to the cave could yet be done, but that required time. What other way? What better, quicker way?

Much that had been not clear before was now explained. The outrage they had perpetrated on the river had not even the slight redeeming color of religious sacrifice. It had been attempted child-murder, brutal, vicious, and hidden even from the other medicine-men.

Among the Shoni there is no penalty for the taking of a life. By custom, as among the old-time Iroquois, the killer waits beside the body of his victim, until discovered. Life may call for life; or a gift to the nearest of the dead man's kin to satisfy the spirit of the departed. Thus the elements of primitive honor prevail.

Not so with Inkato and Kansa. Their crime was so far without the pale that not even their own fraternity must know, much less the family of Ohali. Upon this fact the quick wits of the Snow Hawk seized at once. His problem was resolving rapidly.

But once more Inkato was speaking, as if he had not recently returned from doing foulest deed: "Come, Kansa! Fill the bowls. My belly is an empty gourd."

Through a crack Kioga saw Kansa approach the cooking-pot, fill one bowl, then sniff the contents doubtfully.

"This soup—how strange it smells! I think—" began Kansa, but Inkato cut him short indignantly.

"Rich and full of strength! Fresh this very morning. Drink heartily, O Kansa, and mayhap it will make you great—like Inkato!" And snatching the brimming bowl the old shaman emptied it in greedy gulps.

Not daring to offend his host afresh, Kansa held his nose and also drank. The two put down their bowls and sat in silence.

Then Inkato to Kansa spoke: "Why is your face so pale?"

Kansa made a sickly grimace, answering in a stranger's voice, "I would have asked the same—of you."

Inkato gave a sudden mighty start, clutching at his middle.

And presently, grinning with satisfaction, Kioga went away. One hour, at least, would pass before these two could go about again. . . .

This time Kioga visited the longest tongue in all Hopeka town. He found her crouched before her lodge and stood above her quietly.

"Some one is near," said the old crone harshly. "Who is it?"

"Who brought thee sweets and cakes and wood to burn and water from the spring, when others all forsook thee, Mother Iska?"

A moment she was silent, her blind mask softening. Then: "Kioga, lightener of my sightless misery! How dare you enter Hopeka, where so many wish you ill? What would you have of eyeless Iska? But ask, and it is yours."

He pressed her gnarled old claws tenderly. "I ask no gift. I bring you one. The gift you love the best," Kioga answered.

"Something to whisper in my ear!" she exclaimed in excitement, bending nearer avidly. For news, the spoken word, twenty kinds of gossip—all these made Iska's darkened world endurable.

"A juicy something," Kioga agreed, and sitting close beside old Iska, spoke long and earnestly—just as in years gone by he had brought her other choice gems of information.

IN rapt attention she heard him. "Eh-eh-eh? Go on—go on!" And as he spoke, she stiffened. "O hearts more black than midnight! What do you say to me, Kioga?"

"'Tis true," he assured her. "With these two eyes I saw them throw Ohali in. In these ears he told me all that I tell thee. *The eyes of Mialoka will burn tomorrow night!*"

"O wonder!" Old Iska fairly trembled with the weight of this disclosure. "It will shake all Hopeka. And I,"—her face lit up with joy,—"sightless, aged, crippled old Iska, I alone know it is to happen. . . . Ask any boon for this great gift, Kioga!"

"Some other time, Mother," he said. "But tell this to no living soul," Kioga admonished mysteriously, the more certainly to insure a wide broadcast of all he had confided.

Then leaving excited Iska, Kioga returned without misadventure to his canoe and hurried downstream toward the Caldrons, approaching Chieftain's Head on foot from its one accessible side.

Along the broad ledge that simulates a human brow, and in the hollows so like eyes, he heaped a pile of brush and firewood, ready to be kindled with a spark. That done, he returned again to his forest cave, found all there well, and had four hours of sleep before the morning dawned.

RISING with the sun, Kioga woke Ohali, broke fast on fruit and some acorn-cakes smuggled from Hopeka, and told him of his activities. "Iska knows that you are alive. Iska will tell the whole village. The people will await the coming of Two-Star back to this earth. And then it will be the turn of Kansa and Inkato to shiver in their blankets!"

But poor Ohali did not seem to feel enthusiastic, and to lighten his fears Kioga took down a book from a covered shelf. This and many other volumes he had salvaged from the cabin of a sinking hulk off the seashore; and from it he read to Ohali a tale of Sherwood Forest, translating the English as best he could for Ohali. Thus also had Mokuyi done when teaching Kioga to read and speak English, the mother tongue. And hearing the strange stories of an unknown civilized world, Ohali calmed again.

Then Kioga put the book aside, and after a moment of silence asked: "Hast ever seen a river-Yei, Ohali?"

"No," answered the Shoni boy. "But they look like men, with devils' heads. So my father told me."

"And hands webbed like a duck's, and great brown spots upon their bodies," added Kioga reflectively.

"Have *you* seen one?" asked Ohali curiously.

"No," said Kioga, "though I have poked long poles in every river-hole seeking to bring one forth."

Ohali's eyes grew great. "You dared—do that?"

"Aki was with me," explained Kioga. "Together we fear nothing. And tomorrow," continued Kioga, "the Shoni will see a river-Yei. Now listen well, Ohali."

Rounder still grew Ohali's great dark eyes, as the Snow Hawk spoke. And when Kioga had done: "I dare not—I dare not!" whispered Ohali, pale with fear again.

"If I am close behind, Ohali—then will you dare?"

Ohali's fears grew less. Return to home and family in prospect, and with the

Snow Hawk his ally? "Yes—yes!" he said at last.

"Good, little warrior," commended Kioga. "Now watch."

On a buckskin he drew the outlines of his hands, and with a whetted knife cut out four pieces; and sewed the four together with needle of bone and sinew thread, into the shape of overlarge gloves, save that he left the fingers joined together like the toes of Paddle-foot, the wild duck.

Next from the wall he took down his most hideous medicine-mask, fringed about the open neck with human hair and made to be worn upon the head like a helmet. Then taking deer-grease in a small stone cup, he added to it reddish earthy pigment, mixing the two together.

These several adjuncts to his ambitious schemes he wrapped up in a deer-skin, fastening the bundle to the shoulders of faithful Aki. Then he set leisurely forth, whip in belt, and Ohali by his side, toward his canoe.

Along the way Aki, guardian of their every previous step, roamed off the trail, lured by some vagrant scent or other. Where the forest paths were open, Ohali walked beside Kioga. In tangled places the Snow Hawk lifted him easily in his arms, moving by leaps and bounds if he were no weight at all. Now and then he dropped from cliff to bough, while Ohali hung tightly on, certain that they must plummet far to earth.

But nothing like that happened. Impossible places passed easily beneath his knowing feet; and once indeed, they took six long drops in quick succession. But by now Ohali knew no further fear and enjoyed the swift exhilarating descent.

Almost to the river grave hazard growled fiercely at them from a trail-side cave. With back-laid ears and lashing tail, a great snow-leopard appeared.

Were Aki here, he had not dared venture forth. Now, unmenaced, in another instant he would spring, and rend.

OHALI, standing mesmerized by the golden cat's fire-circled stare, was struck rigid with terror. Not so Kioga.

Before the brute was halfway out, he flicked his length of leather whip behind him. Then, with a move too quick for eye to follow, the long lash slithered forward. Beneath the leopard's hanging jaw the hissing whang-strip barked like an exploded pistol. Then twice again—*crack! crack!*—the long lash made the fur fly up.

Checked in full intent to spring, the stung leopard arched up its spine and hissing like any common alley cat, broke ground before the baffling thong. One more resounding *whack* and the brute turned. And when the lash flicked forth again, the beast was gone.

Gone, too, in another moment, were Kioga and Ohali, who reached the canoe without further incident. Aki found them there, delivered up his shoulder pack, and when the little craft turned downriver, swam powerfully, close behind.

When they had gone a little way, Kioga let the craft drift of its own volition, and reaching into the bundle, took forth the deer-fat paint he had mixed in the cave, handing it to Ohali.

"Now paint me," he said, "so that if any Yei should see me, he would come and call me brother."

IN Hopeka events transpired as Kioga had hoped. As always, the Hopeka women paused, to visit a while with the poor blind Iska, human clearing-house of village information.

Unable to contain her wondrous secret, the aged crone let slip—a word here, a word there—the burning rumor Kioga had confided to her.

The village women, filled with wonder, told other women, in strictest confidence. *"The eyes of Mialoka will burn tonight!"* To those who doubted, "Iska told me," they said, by way of proof. The gossip-pot boiled up; the lid blew off. Like swift wildfire, then, the news flew round. Ohali was in truth, said Iska, the son of First-Chief, come humbly back to earth in the guise of a minor chieftain's child. Ohali's mother, hearing, grew faint.

Corn-cakes burned; meals grew cold; clothing went unmended.

And in his lodge cruel Inkato and Kansa his confederate, ill as men could ever be, lay groaning on the floor. An hour passed before they recovered from the effects of Kioga's potpourri.

Kansa, going to the door, returned with tidings that made Inkato's own blood flow swiftly once again. "The village folk are rising! There is a wondrous stir. Strange rumors are afloat: Iska spreads them even now. 'Tis said Ohali is not mortal child but the son of the First-Chief, Mialoka!"

Up to his feet sprang Inkato. Quivering to vague apprehensions, they looked at one another. "Quick! Knives and tomahawks. Mayhap even now we have waited too long."

Inkato quivered, recalling Ohali's warrior-brothers, his chieftain father, and all those eager knives that waited.

But he was quick to recover a measure of his composure. "Come!" he said to Kansa. "Let us look and listen, and learn what is going on."

To accomplish that, the shamans had but to follow the crowd in their own canoe, downriver.

Along the broad Hiwasi, the village canoes had gathered thickly, filled with Indians from Hopeka. No torch yet blazed above the curving prows. All was dusk within shadow. There came the click and buzz of whispered conversation. Hundreds of dark eyes fastened upon a distant lofty point—the crown of Chieftain's Head, above the Caldrons, coming slowly into view.

"The legend is come true! The eyes of Mialoka burn!"

Suddenly a cry of awe—the eyes far overhead were lighting uncannily: a halo glowed about the rocky mist-draped crown; smoke poured from the stony lips. It was the sign, the portent of some great happening, which blind old Iska had foretold!

Bemused, enthralled by wonder, the Shoni saw the burning eyes grow dim, the fiery chaplet fade against the sky.

The prow- and helmsmen breathed upon their punk-wood tinder, preparing. As the last glow dimmed on Chieftain's Head, they fanned their sparks to flame and lit the smoking torchlights stem and stern. For thus had blind old Iska earlier counseled them to do.

Quivering shadows wriggled on the coaly waters. The river, dark before, became a sea of yellowish light, save where a rocky point threw ebon shade from shore to shore.

THEN something pale and ghostly seemed to float from nowhere. The outlines of a small canoe were seen. Within, a dimly gleaming figure knelt. As the craft came slowly forward, this was seen to be a youth in full regalia. Forth from the gloomy shades his craft of beauty came—canoe of birch-bark white as snow. Forward knelt the figure, robed in frosty cloud. And as the torchlights illumined him, his gala raiment seemed on fire.

Wide-eyed and open-mouthed, the watchers stared, bedazzled.

Then some one sharp of eye saw and recognized: "Ohali—Ohali! 'Tis he, indeed! Ohali is the son of Mialoka!"

From behind Ohali, hitherto almost unseen, a crouching thing of horror reared its goblin head—not head of man but more like devil. Its hands seemed not as common hands, but webbed as if for swimming. Its human body, lithe and muscular, was mottled with great liver-colored spots. No thing like this had ever walked the earth before—yet children among the assemblage well knew it for the ogre with whose name women frighten small offenders.

"A Yei—a river-Yei," they whispered. "Go not too near!"

WHILE they watched, the Yei with webbed hands propelled the snow-white craft along, pausing now and then to jabber weirdly. Thus, with its cargo of comely youth and unearthly terror, the white canoe moved among the village craft. Its white-clad youth half-smiled. Its hideous ogre made furious clutching passes ever and anon, whereat the nearest women screamed and shrank away.

But seeing that no harm befell, a few canoes drew nearer, among them one containing Inkato and Kansa.

As the shamans neared, the foremost figure in the white canoe whispered, "I am afraid."

From behind him came an answer, "Fear not! Behold, they look at us in awe."

In the foremost canoe a stately figure spoke, with trembling hand outstretched. "Ohali, my son, we know not if you live or are a spirit."

Astern the goblin river-Yei muttered something. The youth then spoke in low tones—yet not one was there but heard the words distinctly: "Are you not my father Tenasi?"

A cry of awe rose up. "Miracle! Miracle! Ohali the dumb has answered! Ohali's tongue is loosened!"

Answering uncertainly, Tenasi said: "Once I called Ohali my son. But now he returns from the Caldrons, whence never human body returned before. He comes as the legend says the son of Mialoka will return. He comes back to life as Two-Star. None knew of this until blind old Iska foretold it."

Astern the river-Yei shook and choked, as in convulsion.

"The Yei cannot breathe well when out of water," a Shoni mother whispered to her son near by. "Like fish they are, with gills."

Then rose a warrior seated behind Tenasi, and said, as spokesman for his

brothers: "We are your earthly brothers. What happened to Ohali?"

"He was given to the Yei," came the answer, and gesturing toward the stern: "One of their number brings me back to you."

A great indrawn breath sounded among the people. The canoe containing Inkato and Kansa moved slightly nearer. Both shamans' eyes were glued in fascination upon the white-clothed figure, whose face grew deathly pale beneath that scrutiny.

Ominous as distant thunder, the voice of the chief spoke again: "Who gave Ohali to the river-Yei?"

Still closer moved the shamans' craft. Rigid as an image sat the river-Yei, watching their every move. Muttering something, he heard Ohali repeat—swaying where he sat—

"Two men of wicked hearts."

"Name them," came the fierce appeal from Tenasi. The silent multitude strained their ears to hear. No sound was audible save the distant cough of prowling tiger.

The shaman's craft was only spear-length distant from the white canoe. The eyes of those within it bored into Ohali. Some there were who later said they heard a voice then mutter, "Courage!" Right or wrong, Ohali seemed to stiffen, though his voice fell to a whisper. He answered slowly, "The name of one was—"

Suddenly one in the craft so close beside him sprang up, with frightful yell, and in his back-drawn hand a war-ax gleamed. Ohali did not stir, but gripped the gunwales as if by some command.

In a voice like ice some one unknown finished Ohali's sentence, pronouncing the name he feared to utter: "Kansa!"

KIOGA had sought only the disgrace of Kansa, not the penalty of death. But now there was no choice. He acted to save Ohali's life.

Before the younger shaman could strike, Kansa seemed to choke and wither where he stood. Those close by could hear a high-pitched *twang* and see an arrow sticking through his neck. Then Kansa toppled limply into the river. And as he sank the river-Yei watched fixedly.

Again the voice of Tenasi: "Who was the other?"

Again Ohali whispered, "The other's name—was Inkato!"

"Yala-i!" Shrill and terrible rose that cry from behind the chief, out of the mouths of Ohali's brothers. "Quick, after him!"

But Inkato had acted swiftly, already swung his craft out into the current, and crouching somewhat forward, presented little target to the spears that glanced the water all around.

Though they might have caught up with him, it was seen to be unnecessary —and dangerous. The shaman raised a startled yell. Slowly but inexorably, the currents were bearing him toward the fate to which he had sent so many others —straight to the Caldrons of the Yei.

IN the white canoe Ohali swayed. Up rose the river-Yei to bolster him. Ohali heard swift muffled words close at his ear: "Well done, little brother! They'll trouble thee no more. Good-by, O son of Mialoka."

"Good-by," answered Ohali brokenly, and to the horror of the onlookers, threw impulsive arms about the Yei. "Ohali never will forget."

"Hang on," came Kioga's final word. Ohali gripped the gunwales tightly.

One spring, a knifelike entry with little splash—that quickly the Yei was gone beneath the surface, the same surface which carried Inkato away.

With beating heart Ohali watched for sign of him upon the water. A minute passed—another. Clutching the gunwales, the boy went paler than before. Then from somewhere in the shadows near the bank, there came a loud and imperious call:

"Ahai! Aki! Aki!"—followed by a whistle.

Downstream, like rat in sinking trap, Inkato heard that call, and glancing shoreward saw a naked figure vanish from the moon's new light. Seeing, Inkato stared, drop-jawed. On one bare hip he dimly saw the mark of salmon's tail. Then glancing upward he caught a last view of Chieftain's Head and stared anew. For where the fire had burned, the stony face had cracked; the Chieftain seemed to smile. Then mists enwrapped bewildered Inkato, and he was seen no more.

Ohali also heard that imperative summons and a bear's answering call. Hearing, he smiled with happy recollection of a strange exciting adventure.

But Kioga, the Snow-Hawk, climbing the rims and ledges above the Caldrons, his face to the forest and the future, did not look back.

Another unique exploit of "One Against a Wilderness" will appear in our next issue.

REAL EX-

King of

In this department we print each month a group of true stories told by our readers. First, a famous explorer tells of his experiences with polar bears.

IN the Arctic we kill polar bears and the Barren Ground grizzly only for museum specimens, or because they endanger our lives or the lives of our dogs. We may also kill them because we need the meat for food, or the skins for clothing and camp equipment. All of which is preliminary to the statement that the thirteen grizzlies and dozens of polar bears that have fallen to my rifle were killed for scientific or other good reasons; never for sport.

Since polar bears live almost exclusively by hunting seals, they are likely to mistake Arctic explorers and Eskimo hunters for seals, and to attack them upon that basis. That is what makes the polar bear, in my opinion, the most dangerous beast of prey among the land animals of the North American continent. He is almost as large as a Kodiak bear; and very few animals are his superior in intelligence. Moreover, his cream-white fur is a protective coloring against a background of ice or snow.

In my two books, "The Friendly Arctic" and "My Life With the Eskimo"*, will be found a number of stories of encounters with polar bears. Perhaps the most amazing experience was that in which the bear hunted *me*.

It was my custom while looking for game above the Arctic Circle to sit on the top of a hill or a pressure-ridge of ice for perhaps five minutes, at intervals of a mile or two, and with elbows resting on my knees, to sweep the horizon with a powerful pair of binoculars. Thus it was possible to see a caribou at a distance of three or four miles—and a polar bear a mile away. One day, while traveling along the coast east of the Mackenzie Delta, a yellowish spot, perhaps a mile out on the sea ice, attracted my attention. I kept my glasses trained on this spot a long time, but could see no movement. This, however, was not conclusive proof that it was not a polar bear, for these animals are likely to sleep for hours after a full meal.

Carefully searching the tundra, as well as the sea ice, with my binoculars, I finally came back to the place where the yellowish spot should have been. It had disappeared! That meant but one thing: it *was* a polar bear, and he had finished his nap.

For a mile offshore the ice was crushed and broken, where the wind had piled it up against the land. Jagged ridges, sometimes forty feet high, intersected the chaotic mass here and there; the sun shone upon a million minarets of ice and snow; pinnacles raised themselves fifty feet into the air. Carefully taking my bearings on a mountain peak and one of these pinnacles, I hastened down to the shore and out over the ice.

After proceeding what seemed to me to be a mile, I climbed a forty-foot ridge and looked around for the bear; he was not in sight. I then lined up another ridge, about a quarter of a mile farther out to sea, on the assumption that the bear would be found somewhere beyond that point. If not, it would be necessary for me to travel in a large circle until I came upon his trail.

I had finished looking over the ice, both with and without my binoculars, and was actually clambering down from my perch, with my rifle in its sealskin cover, when I heard behind me a noise something like the hiss of an angry goose. On a ridge about twenty feet distant, and almost above me, stood the polar bear! Had I stayed on the ridge five minutes longer, there is every reason to believe that he would have pounced upon me, in the belief that I was some sort of seal. By giving me warning, however, he made it possible for me to snatch my rifle from its cover and bring him down.

The bear's trail, which I then picked up, told the following story: I had overestimated the distance of the beast from shore, and had passed a little to the windward of the spot where he lay. On getting my scent, the bear had come up

*The Macmillan Co., New York.

PERIENCES *the North*

As told to Burt McConnell
by VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON

wind to my trail, and had followed it. It had not occurred to me to look back; I was so used to hunting polar bears that the possibility of one hunting me would have seemed preposterous.

On shore, polar bears are rather timid; they are actually afraid of men, dogs and wolves. Out on the drifting pack, however, they have no enemy to fear. In fact, they are familiar with only three living things—the seal, on which they live; the white fox, that scavenger of the Arctic; and the sea gulls, which flutter about the polar bear after he has killed a seal. The fox, which is almost as much of a sea animal as the polar bear, is unable to provide his own living when on the drifting ice, so he follows the bear. When a bear kills a seal, he usually eats at least fifty pounds of the blubber and perhaps some of the meat, then curls up behind an ice-cake and goes to sleep. The foxes finish the carcass, and after them come the gulls. If the bear returns for another meal, the foxes and gulls scatter to the four winds. Thus the polar bear gets the impression that these creatures are not dangerous, but merely too crafty to be caught.

A polar bear is able to tell the difference between a living seal and the carcass when he sniffs the air. Traveling to leeward of a camp on the ice, a polar bear is no doubt bewildered by the many strange odors that assail his sensitive nostrils. There is, however, usually one familiar smell: that of seal-meat. Since every other living creature usually makes way for the polar bear, he has no cause for fear, and comes straight up wind into camp. The dogs are usually tied at intervals of six or eight feet along a picket line, and if one of them happens to get up and shake the snow out of his coat, the bear is apt to conclude that here are some live seals, after all. His approach becomes stealthy in the extreme, but eventually one of the dogs sees, hears, or smells the bear, and begins to bark.

This is the signal for all the dogs to leap up and start barking. The bear hesitates. Judging from his actions on such an occasion, he thinks the dogs are just another kind of fox, and therefore beneath his contempt. His keen sense of smell, however, reminds him there is seal-meat in the camp, and he continues his approach, openly and fearlessly. By that time the commotion has awakened one of us, and a properly placed bullet ends the story.

ON a day late in March six of us, traveling by dog-team over the ice between Alaska and Banks Land, were halted by a narrow lead of open water. Three or four seals were killed for both men and dogs, and one member of the party set about making a blubber-burning stove from a provision-tin. Our two rifles were cleaned and put in their cases, and we were cooking seal-meat with the blubber from the same animal when we were brought to our feet by a great commotion among the dogs. They were still hitched to the sleds at the edge of the ice, some fifty feet distant. The man nearest them ran to stop what we thought, from past experience, was a dog-fight. Three of us followed, but turned back to the fire when it seemed that our assistance would not be needed. Before we reached our seats we heard a shout: "It's a bear!"

The voice had an ominous ring, as if the polar bear had reached the dogs and was killing them, one at a time, with a single blow of his powerful forepaws. If that were the case, we would have to haul our heavy sleds back to shore—and that would take weeks. We leaped to our feet, therefore, and rushed with one accord to where the two rifles lay on the sleds. Arriving at the spot, we found that the great danger was not that the bear would attack the dogs, but that the dogs would pull the sleds into the water in their eagerness to get at the bear—in which case we would lose everything.

While two members of the party restrained the dogs, and two of us grabbed

our rifles, the fifth man armed himself with our ice-spear—and the sixth begged us not to shoot until he had obtained a photograph of the magnificent specimen which stood on the opposite side of the open water, not more than thirty feet distant. Apparently the bear was not in the least afraid of the dogs—or of us. The dogs tugged at their harness and barked, and we yelled warnings to one another, but the bear seemed to consider us just another species of seal. He stood facing us, at the edge of the opposite ice-field, quite unconcerned, looking into the water and swinging his head, as if he were trying to decide whether to plunge in and swim across.

At this critical moment the bear's left foreleg was knocked completely out from under him by a .30-.30 bullet from my companion's rifle. The bear was so close to the edge that he tumbled into the icy water. Standing on the opposite edge, we could see evidences of a mighty struggle in the gray-green depths. Would he be driven into an insane fury by the bullet wound, clamber out on our side, and cut a swath among us—and the dogs—before he could be dispatched?

By that time I had reached my rifle-case. The bear came to the surface, apparently with no thought whatever of visiting our camp. As he clambered out on the opposite side, his only thought evidently was to escape. But the bear was wounded, and it would be better to end his misery. Both of us fired, and both bullets took effect, but the bear disappeared behind a pressure-ridge before we could fire again.

During the excitement the ice-fields practically came together, and two of the men, with camera and rifle, crossed and took up the broad trail of blood. Within half a mile they sighted the bear limping along; also, the bear saw them, and immediately dived into the nearest open water. It should have been a simple matter for the man carrying the .30-.30 to put a bullet in a vital spot when the bear came to the surface; but after I heard three shots, it seemed to me that a harder-shooting rifle was needed. So I took up the trail, came upon the bear, and killed him with a bullet through the heart as he clambered out onto the ice.

Standing at the edge of another lead early one morning with two companions, I noticed a polar bear swimming in the open water. Ice had begun to form, but it was not yet strong enough to bear his weight. It was, however, too thick to allow him to swim on the surface. The bear, therefore, would paddle along for eight or ten yards, apparently until he became tired of breaking his way through the young ice, then make a dive. He would swim under water for about twenty yards, then come up for air, breaking his way through and resting his forelegs upon the ice while he looked about. He would again paddle a few yards, then dive.

In this fashion he finally reached our camp. He stood on the heavy floe, sniffing, then came toward us at a leisurely walk. Up to this time the dogs had not discovered the bear's presence; but now, with the animal in plain sight, they began to bark furiously. The bear was not disconcerted in the least by the terrific uproar; his sense of smell told him that there was seal-meat in the offing, and he immediately headed for it, paying no attention whatever to us or the dogs. When he was in a convenient spot for skinning, I fired.

On another occasion, when we were returning to our base camp, some four hundred and fifty miles to the southward, my two companions and I pitched our tent about fifteen yards from the open water. Suddenly one member of the party stopped to examine closely what he thought was a piece of ice, drifting along about two hundred yards from the tent. When it seemed to him that the ice was drifting too rapidly, he picked up his binoculars to see what it really was. As he was focusing them upon the object, it disappeared beneath the surface—and reappeared a little nearer camp. We were being stalked by a polar bear.

The three of us got our rifles, and two of us took up positions behind the sleds; the third man stayed with the dogs. Apparently the bear had sighted them, sleeping in a row on the ice, and had concluded that they were seals basking in the warm sunshine. His patience was remarkable. He would swim slowly back and forth, occasionally lifting his head a little to see if the "seals" were still there. But the dogs slept peacefully on. And this in itself should have warned the bear, for a seal takes only short naps, and frequently raises his head to look about for his natural enemy.

Finally the bear maneuvered to a spot nearly opposite the camp, raised his forepaws upon the ice, and hauled him-

self out of the water. He made no sound, and moved with incredible swiftness; in fact, he was within ten feet of my companion before he could fire. The bear turned a complete somersault, still headed in our direction. My companion again pulled the trigger, but it would not budge; his rifle was jammed! At this rather critical juncture, and without endangering my companion's life, I was able to get in a shot with my .256. The bear rolled over dead, so close that we could almost touch him.

Eskimos once assured me, with great solemnity, that polar bears and other animals are much wiser than men.

"Why, then, do they allow themselves to be killed by Eskimo hunters?" I asked.

They informed me that there are certain things that polar bears and seals need—things which they can get only from men. Seals and whales, for example, live in salt water, and get quite thirsty. When they want a drink of fresh water, they have to come to men for it. A seal, therefore, will allow himself to be killed by a hunter, who will give him a drink of water in return; that is why an Eskimo pours a dipper of water into the mouth of a seal when he brings it ashore. If a hunter neglects to do this, all the other seals will find it out, and no other seal will ever allow himself to be killed by that particular hunter, because he knows he will not get a drink!

The polar bear, I was told, does not suffer from thirst as much as seals, because he can get fresh water on top of the ice—water that is formed by the sun's action upon snow. He can also eat snow. But, say the Eskimos, polar bears nevertheless are dependent to some extent upon men; they are unable to make for themselves certain tools which they need. When, therefore, a polar bear has been killed, his soul accompanies the skin into the hunter's house, and stays there for several days. During this time the skin is hung up in the house, together with the tools which the bear needs. At the end of the fourth or fifth day, according to the Eskimos, the soul of the bear is driven out of the house. It takes with it the souls of the tools which have been suspended with it, and uses them thereafter. If, during those days, the bear's soul has been treated as an honored guest, if it has received the souls of implements of good quality, then it will report these things in the land of the polar bears to which it returns, and other bears will be not only willing but anxious to be killed by an Eskimo hunter of such integrity.

Be that as it may, I shall continue to believe that polar bears are not in search of tools, but fresh meat, when they enter a camp. Take, for example, the bear that made a rather dramatic approach to our tent out on the drifting pack: My two companions were about a quarter of a mile distant at the time, and our dogs were strung out, as usual, far enough apart to keep them from fighting. I was standing on a hummock, searching the surface of the ice with my glasses. Suddenly I saw a polar bear advancing toward the camp at a steady walk. At almost the same instant he caught sight of the dogs. He began to stalk them as he would a seal—he thrust out his head, laid his lower jaw on the ice, and propelled himself along like a toboggan.

MY one thought was to save the dogs. and prevent us from being stranded hundreds of miles from the nearest land. Thinking I might attract the bear's attention away from them, I shouted. This, however, merely drew the attention of the dogs toward me, and away from the bear, which continued to advance. Even when he reached a hummock about twenty yards from the dogs, they had no warning of his presence.

The bear partly raised himself from the ice, ready for his customary dash. In a moment he would be upon the dogs, and when he found they weren't seals after all, it would be too late. I was more than a hundred yards away, and badly out of breath from my dash over the rough ice, but I took aim and fired. The bullet in some way seemed to paralyze the bear's spine, for his forelegs doubled beneath him. As he slid backward, his hind-legs also crumpled.

I approached, keeping my rifle ready. The bear's eyes followed every movement of mine. He was very much alive, but bleeding profusely. Then, before I could quite make up my mind to finish him with a bullet through the heart, he launched himself directly at me, without the slightest preparation or warning! But experience with polar bears had taught me to be wary. My rifle was ready; and as the bear leaped, I pulled the trigger. The bullet pierced the brain. It was a narrow escape, for by the time the bear collapsed, he was so close—less than six feet—that his blood spattered upon my boots.

A Job for Funston

"TRACY, I want a report on the narrow-gauge railroad up to Japala: How much of it, if any, is torn up, whether or not the bridges are blown, and if so, the best place on the streams for fording artillery and wagon-trains. It's a tough job, but must be done. You will be within the Mexican lines from the minute you pass El Tejar, the marine outpost. Good-by and good luck."

General Frederick Funston gave me these orders in his office in the Terminal building at Vera Cruz, Mexico, 1914. Intelligence—that was my job; and of all the dirty, dangerous, poorly paid and unrewarded work I ever did, that was it.

I checked out through the marine lines at El Tejar, shortly after dark. For the first mile or two I would have to make my way through the swamps to get around the Mexican outposts; after that I would have to stick to the railway, which was also the main highway for Mexican troops patrolling the country. What would happen if I were captured by Mexican soldiers would not stand telling, for I was listed as a deserter from the Mexican army.

"Don't carry much of an outfit, do you?" Captain Hughes asked.

"Plenty," I told him: "Forty-five automatic, knife, field-glasses, flashlight, hundred capsules of quinine, six clips for the forty-five, and half a pound of tobacco!"

Before morning I had covered ten miles of track; then I holed up for the day under the roots of a banyan tree, and trusted to luck. . . .

It took me five days to cover the railway to Jalapa; but I had every tie and rail labeled, as well as several Mexican camps along the route. I had also carefully cut the wires to a mine that was planted under a bridge. All the bridges may have been mined, but that was the only one I could get to, as they were all guarded by soldiers.

On the return trip I reversed the procedure. I traveled by day, keeping in sight of the railway, but as far back in the bush as possible. Traveling through the bush was pure hell, as I could not follow any established road or trail. I never knew when I was going to run into natives or native houses. The natives were inoffensive; but there was always the chance that they would talk.

I had taken so much quinine that my head was ringing, and my body was one mass of sores from the bites of ticks. Thousands of little seed ticks, no larger than a pin-head when they landed on you, but growing to the size of a bean with a day's feeding. My main danger, or so I thought, was from patrols of Federal soldiers, and there were plenty of them scouring the country. Only a few days before, two sailors had ridden past the outposts, and were never seen again.

I came to a large clearing in the bush. To cross it, was half a mile; to go around meant at least three miles of bush-dodging; and I was getting mighty well fed up. I was sick and hungry, and my luck had been so good that I decided to take a chance.

Sometime later the crowing of chickens indicated a house, so I decided to look it over, and if it appeared safe, to try for something to eat. It had been twenty-four hours since I had last tasted food, and that only a poorly roasted iguana. . . . While still some distance away I heard the piercing screams of a woman. As I ran, the screaming increased, and then I came out into a small clearing around a native thatched hut. In front of the house a woman was struggling fiercely in the clutches of a scarecrow of a man. She was fighting silently; the screams were coming from inside the house.

My presence went unnoticed until I knocked the man in the head with my pistol; then the woman just folded up. I jumped to the door of the hut, and faced a sight that made my blood boil, and my pistol fairly to leap in my hand.

When the American forces landed in Vera Cruz, they seized the old fortress prison of San Juan del Uloa. This infamous prison, built on an island in the harbor of Vera Cruz, was the worst prison in Mexico, probably in the New World. Now some misguided officer released nearly all the prisoners.

No doubt they were enough to excite sympathy. Political prisoners, and the

A noted soldier of fortune tells of a desperate adventure while serving as an Intelligence officer.

By TRACY RICHARDSON

worst criminals were the ones confined on the island. To be sentenced to Uloa was generally regarded as a death-sentence, the average prisoner living less than five years, it was said. They were ill-fed, ragged, covered with vermin and never permitted to shave.

Part of the cells of Uloa are built, or rather dug, out of the coral foundations. At high tide the water rises from two to five feet in these dank dungeons. I had served in the north of Mexico with Colonel Cesar Canallas, who had served two years in San Juan del Uloa, a political prisoner; and he had told me plenty of tales about the horrors of this prison.

After things had quieted down, the Americans realized the mistake they had made in liberating these desperate prisoners, but it was too late, for most of them had fled the city and taken to the bush, where they robbed and killed with the joy of maniacs.

INSIDE the room I saw three men, unshaven, ragged and as dirty specimens as it would be possible to imagine. One look at them, and I knew I was faced with escapees from Uloa prison, mad dogs. On a cow-hide bed was another woman, held at head and feet by two of the men.

I fired three times with my forty-five, and thanked God that I was an expert with a pistol. When I removed one of the bodies, which had fallen across the woman, she fell to the floor and kissed my feet.

Then, as she drew herself up, I saw a look of stark terror freeze her expression. With a leap I whirled to meet the new danger. I was face to face with the man I had downed in the yard. He missed me with a swing of his machete, and another shot closed the career of the last of the four thugs. They would commit no more crimes.

I dragged the bodies outside and tried to comfort the women. I told them I was hungry, and they served my wants with a pitiful eagerness, placing before me tortillas, beans and eggs, all they had. Their father and husband was away at a near-by town with a cargo of chickens, and would be home that night.

No one knows how good beans and tortillas can taste until he is really hungry. I put away a good feed, and was stretching out for a rest when one of the women, hearing a noise outside, went to the door.

"The soldiers are coming," she said.

Sure enough, entering the edge of the clearing was a squadron of about twenty mounted Federal soldiers. That was enough for me. I dashed out the back way, and made for the bush on the dead run. As I left the clearing, a couple of bullets cut close to me, and I heard the soldiers shouting. I fairly flew. For a few minutes I heard no sound of pursuit; then I heard calls and the sound of crashing bushes as the soldiers searched for me. I kept on the run, in the general direction of El Tejar, which was still several miles distant.

I ran until I could stand it no longer. I could hear sounds of searchers behind and ahead of me. It looked as if it was hopeless. I came out into one of those open spaces where nothing grows but a patch of cactus. I crawled on my belly into the shelter of the thorn bushes. Every move I made I was pricked by the spines, but I kept at it until I was in the center of the cactus patch. There I tried to rest. The cactus-patch was also the home of countless ants. No sooner had I settled down than they swarmed over me. Ants by the hundreds, in my hair, in my ears and nose, biting and crawling.

Furiously I chewed tobacco. The juice I smeared over my face, neck and hands, then as much as I could over my body. The tobacco juice helped, but the ants still made life miserable for me. To lie still meant ants; to move meant cactus thorns; to leave the place meant capture and sure death at the hands of the Federal soldiers. . . . I lay there until sundown, and then worked my way out.

I was as near desperate as a man could get and still retain his senses. I gave over all thought of concealment, and made directly for the railway.

Darkness fell before I reached the rails, and then it began to rain. It poured down in torrents, but the cool water relieved my burning skin. Through the blinding storm I made my way down the track toward El Tejar. Half a mile from the American outposts was a Mexican guard. They were all under cover, and I passed without challenge. I knew then that I was getting near the American point sentry. I whistled and used my flash-light to give warning that I was coming. I doubted if I could be heard above the storm.

I stumbled as my foot missed a slippery cross-tie. Something snatched my hat from my head; then I heard the whiplike crack of a rifle and a loud challenge: "Halt! Who goes there?"

I let out a yell that but for the rain could have been heard in Vera Cruz, six miles away. The sentry was not over fifteen feet away, and but for my fall would have killed me. I was held at bayonet-point until an excited sergeant of the guard came on the double. I could hardly blame the sentry for not recognizing me as a white man.

I spent the rest of the night under the ministrations of two hospital orderlies, having the ticks dug out, and iodine painted over my cuts and bites.

Next morning I reported to General Funston, giving him my map with all details of the railway and rivers.

"That's fine, Tracy," said the General. "Glad you got back. I've another job for you. I want you to fly over that country in one of the naval planes and make photographs. We'll need them when we advance."

A few days later I was called to El Tejar. There I met a Mexican officer and an old man—the father and husband of the two women I had saved from the convicts. When the officer saw me, he threw his arms around me in a Latin embrace—he was an old friend of mine from the Red Flag Revolution.

"Colonel, I might have known that you would be doing this kind of work. That shooting looked like your mark. For the service you did the Mexican government the other day you will no longer be called a deserter. You are our friend, even though we may be fighting on opposite sides."

He gave me a pass, permitting me to go through all Mexican lines in the vicinity of Vera Cruz. But I never got an opportunity to use it; a few days later I was on my way to France.

(After fighting several successful bouts staged for the amusement of the bored miners at Cobalt, ex-soldier McLaglen decides to become a professional fighter.)

I'M a boxer now, and fight all the local champions. I meet a former Naval officer, and I engage him for my manager.

Our first fight is arranged at Port Arthur, a backwoods kind of lawless town. My manager gets drunk, and I'm awfully ashamed. I never drank a drop until I was thirty. I felt he was showing me up in this place, so the next morning in the dining-room I tell him:

"You're taking advantage of me because I'm younger. We're through; you are not connected with me in this business any longer." He turns around, catches up a bottle of water, and throws it at me. I hit him, and he fell to the floor against the radiator. He had to have his eye out, and I'm sent to jail.

A man bailed me out; he had come to the fight the night before and wished me luck. . . . I found out he'd been a noted safe-blower. He told me how he did it. . . . Funny thing—I had boxed my way around the world when I met this fellow again at Melbourne, Australia. He had become a well-known business man.

Another strange reunion happened when I was filming "What Price Glory," in Hollywood. We were doing the war sequence, with all the soldiers making a charge on the hill. Some one behind me said: "Captain, if you ever want a handy man, don't forget me!" I turned around and saw a familiar face.

"Aren't you my ex-manager?" Yes, there he was, with the glass eye I had caused him to wear, working as an extra on our lot. A few weeks later I gave him his fare to Vancouver, where he wanted to go.

Before I left the North American continent, I had earned the title of "Champion of Eastern Canada." When the profits of fighting ran low, I joined medicine and wild West shows. Once I was

Fighting Actor

The film-world opens its doors to him.

By VICTOR McLAGLEN

featured on the Pantages vaudeville circuit in a wrestling act. . . .I went back to Vancouver to fight Jack Johnson in a no-decision bout.

Then the wanderlust gripped me again. . . . I boxed my way to Hawaii, the Fiji Islands, Tahiti and Australia—did a little gold-rush mining at Kalgoorlie, and went on from there to Ceylon and Bombay. I instructed the Rajah of Arcat, India, in boxing—taught him to punch the bag. At night he would tell me stories; once he graphically described how his parents were poisoned. A few years later I picked up a paper and read that the Rajah had been poisoned too.

When the World War was declared, I was finally paying my first visit home in South Africa, where my father was then stationed as Colonial bishop. All my brothers had arrived in England from the four corners; in a few days they were headed for different parts of the British front. I was made a full lieutenant and sent to Mesopotamia.

We had a number of exciting engagements with the Turks and Arabs, and finally were hemmed in on the peninsula at Bagdad. We barb-wired it. I was made provost marshal in charge of military and police. All the passes were issued by me; all the shipments that came up the river were confiscated by me. I took charge of all the towns around Bagdad which consisted of half a million Arabs, Jews, Mohammedans, Christians.

FIGHTING is fighting, no matter where it is. Nothing thrilling in seeing Arabs digging up the dead to get blankets; nothing thrilling either, in eating rotten rations and drinking putrid water. The only thrill was in seeing wonderful old Bagdad: the bazaars and streets, the colorful costumes, the barbaric drums, the call to prayers, the solemn caravans of camels, presented as fantastic a world as any described in "A Thousand and One Nights." What man would be immune to temptation and to romance in such a setting?

SHE was the only daughter of a family of high caste and wealth who lived a few doors away from the great twelve-room house I called home. I went to her home to dine often. From her barred window over the big front door, she waited—and watched for me.

I was preparing to marry and settle down in this paradise. . . . The natives loved me, and feared me too. And this gentle, grave race made strange appeal to me. I went to England to be mustered out, and return to Bagdad.

(But neither Bagdad nor his Arabian sweetheart ever saw the English Sahib again. On the same ship to England with him went his future brother-in-law. Through him, he met the woman who became his wife.)

After the war, when London was an economic desert, I tried to get back in the boxing game. One fight was enough to prove to me that I had stayed away too long to come back. I was pondering on what to do next when, one night, in the National Sporting Club in London, I attracted the notice of an important British film producer, I. B. Davidson.

He asked if I would like to be filmed.

"I'm not an actor," I told him. "Never desired to be, and don't think I could be."

Davidson invited me to go out to the studio and make a test. They were filming "The Call of the Wild," and they offered me forty pounds a week to play the male lead. I accepted. That picture turned out to be one of the biggest hits of the time, and I was starred for four years before Stuart Blackton brought me to Hollywood.

My first talky "Black Watch" was bad. The critics put me at the top of the list of people expected to be eliminated by the new medium. But I fought it through.

That's the reason the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences award I won for "The Informer" rôle is so precious to me. I feel like a boy who tried to pass an examination and failed, and by perseverance succeeded.

My Life at Sea

THE morning after we were past old Stiff, we set the royals again. Hoisting the fore royal, I pulled forehand, pulling straight down upon the halyard fall. The fall passed through a block upon the deck, the others pulling lengthwise on it. And just when the sail was almost up, the fall gave way, and the heavy wooden block dropped on my head, from many feet above.

When I came to, I was in a chair and the skipper's wife was washing my split head. It was a nasty wound, and I felt deathly sick; I staggered as I walked. But there's scant mercy in a ship at sea. If I had been a lad ashore, I should have been in bed, maybe in hospital. I kept the deck. And early in the night Clegg shouted: "Hop up and loose the crossjack, two of you!" I was the nearest to the rigging. So up I went. And God knows how I did it! I could not see a thing. Clegg shouted: "Can't you move, up there? Wake up! Are you asleep?" I loosed my half of the sail, and crawled down somehow. You take what comes, at sea. It's part of being a sailor. . . .

While we climbed the long hill to the equator, Kylon the Finn grew ever more strange. He'd sit alone at night, and talk. "Who are you talking to?" Clegg asked one night.

"I speaks mitt mein goot vren', sir."

"He doesn't answer you?" asked Clegg.

And Kylon said: "Yow bat. He talk me mitt, sir."

Sometimes he'd lie upon the sea-wet deck, and writhe, and call aloud a woman's name. He took to eating ever less and less. His huge frame wasted. The mates were kindly. The Old Man said: "You'll see that no one troubles that poor mad fellow." There was no need for him to say it.

One day I came well nigh to hating Clegg. He'd often tried me sorely by picking for me all the hardest jobs aloft. And now he gave me a small pot of gilt paint, and a paint-brush. "Hop up and gild the trucks!" he ordered me—as though to gild a truck were just as simple as to go picking roses.

There was no wind. The ship was pitching like a hurdling horse to a long high steep-sided swell. One minute her stem would lift almost clear of the water, her bows go soaring up. Next instant down her bow would go until the water gurgled to her forecastle head. You scarce could walk along the deck for her wild pitching. And when a man's aloft, it's pitching that he feels far worse than rolling.

The highest part of a ship's mast is called the pole. It goes up from where the rigging ends, up to the topmost summit. A tall pole finishes a ship with perfect symmetry. Our poles were ten feet long. And since there is no rigging on the pole, you have to go up monkey-fashion. The pole ends at the truck, a rounded wooden ball. And our trucks were kept gilded—a last fancy touch.

So up I started, and knowing I had a dizzy job to do, began to tremble. The vertigo was back. Was my time come at last? I passed the place whence long ago Furst fell from. And I went on. The pole looked like a mile. I clenched my teeth, and started up it monkey-fashion. Once when she took a wild pitch I thought my time was come, and almost yelled. A hundred and ninety feet below, the deck was awaiting me. Somehow I gilded that fore truck. I don't know how. And down I went. And when I reached the solid deck, there wasn't any peace, because I knew I had to gild three more ere I was done. And up I went again, the same thing over on the mainmast. And down I came again. I was half done. And as I started up the mizzenmast I saw the Old Man on the poop near by; and he saw me. He didn't see my fear, because I didn't let him. To brace myself, I sang:

> Tom's gone, what shall I do?
> *Hilo! Hilo!*
> Where Tom's gone I must go too,
> *Tom's gone to Hilo!*

And hearing me, the Old Man called: "You! Quit that singing and get on with your work!" So then I ran, despite my blurry eyes, my horrid fear. I went up like a frightened monkey, determined that he should not guess my fear. I saw the old devil eying me. When I came down and went up to the poop, to start to climb the jigger mast, he saw me shaking.

A famous writer here brings his fascinating story of seafaring to its dramatic conclusion.

By BILL ADAMS

"What's the matter, boy?" he asked.

I said: "I'm trying to see how fast, sir, I can gild the trucks. I'm out of breath a bit."

He said: "You see you gild 'em properly, and don't miss any place!"

Though shorter than the other masts, the jigger is the worst, for it has a longer pole. But up I went, and down I came at last. I leaned against the mast, shaky-limbed—and Clegg said: "By gad, Bill, but you're fast! You're a damned handy sailor, aren't you, eh?"

So then I had to look at him, and laugh. I said: "If I'm a sailor, it's your doing maybe, sir."

He said: "Oh, no! You've got the breed in you, old man."

That night Clegg told me that he got a wigging from the skipper for sending anyone aloft to gild the trucks when she was pitching so. And I said: "To hell with the skipper! I got 'em gilded, didn't I? What's all the growl about?" And that was not all brag. I loved Clegg then more than ever yet I'd loved him.

One night soon after that, while we was talking with him on the poop, Clegg said: "By God, Bill, I feel ill." He said he had a sort of weak all-over feeling. And next day he laid up, and Chink took his watch. We were a week or two from Frisco, and everyone was busy getting the ship into fancy dress for port once more.

WE sailed in through the Golden Gate one sunny afternoon and dropped the hook. The port was full of ships—a row of ships at anchor. Along the waterfront a forest of tall masts and spreading spars. *Euphrosyne* was there, and *Illawarra, Melanope, Sorunna, Eurydice.* Oh, I could name the names of sixty ships. But they'd mean naught to you.

A little distance from us lay a great barque from Maine. We'd heard of her. All sailors knew her well. A brutal Yankee hell-wagon, where men were treated worse than any dogs ashore. Her mates wore knuckle-dusters, carried belaying-pins. Her skipper was a devil out of hell. God help the sailor who didn't do his work! No mercy for him. And did he do it, mercy scant enough!

The minute we'd our anchor down a boarding-master came aboard. He went toward the forecastle where our crew were gone. And on the way he met with Kylon. "Hello, my hearty! Here, have a drink on me!"

And Kylon sent the rot-gut bottle to his lips and took a long, long swallow. "Go on! Drink hearty, sailor! That's the real stuff! It warms a sailor's blood when he's come round the Horn." So Kylon tipped the bottle up again. And then the boarding-master had him by the arm. "Come on, my lad! I've got a dandy berth for you, my bully boy!"

And Brown, the boarding-master, took off that wasted, fuddled Finn to that hard hell-wagon. He sold him to her skipper who'd been waiting for one man to fill his crew. And then she hove her anchor up and stood away to sea. We never heard of Kylon any more. . . .

We docked next morning, and Clegg was taken to a hospital. He said to me: "So long! You'll come and see me, eh?"

"Yes sir," I answered him.

Lifting a feeble hand, he said, smiling to me: "Cut out the 'sir,' old man. We're *shipmates,* you and I."

And later he said: "The doctors tell me that my heart is crocky. They say —that I can never—go to sea again." And I can't tell you of the tone he said

those words in! I felt ashamed of my great strength. Before another Sunday he was upon his way to Liverpool.

The Frisco waterfront was lovely in those days. You could walk for blocks beneath the long jib-booms of clippers stretched across the street. You'd see their figureheads. A dragon, one ship had, its red maw open and its white fangs showing. And some had knights or warriors, with spears, and swords, and shields. And many ships had women for their figureheads. Ours was the fairest figurehead of all: a white-robed woman with her white breast bare. One arm outstretched, a finger pointing to the far away. And in her other hand she held a long silver horn to her lips, about to blow on it. "That is the prettiest ship of all," you'd hear the shore folk say, as they strolled along the waterfront.

And by and by the good day came again when we were homeward bound. Two other lofty clippers put to sea with us, all Falmouth-bound. When we hove our anchor up, we made the bay ring:

California's lovely daughters,
We must now bid you adieu;
But it's long that we'll remember
Happy hours we've spent with you.
Rolling home, rolling home,
Rolling home across the sea,
Rolling home to merrie England,
To the land where we would be.

It was the same old song and dance as usual. We'd see a ship, and race, and leave her far astern. We'd shake the maggots from the hard-tack, and curse the smelly pork. But now the older apprentices were grown more serious. Chink, Polly, Tattersall, and Douglas, who was third mate, would be out of their time when we came home. And so they studied navigation in the dog-watches. Next voyage there'd be a lot of green kids in the half-deck.

I mind a night far down in the Pacific. I was asleep, but Paddy woke me up.

"My God, I've heard the banshee!" Paddy said, his face white.

"You silly fool, get out of here. Get out and go to hell and let me sleep," I laughed.

But Paddy said: "You come on deck and listen!" So I rolled out and followed them.

You know what's meant by banshee? It is a ghost the Irish talk about. You hear the silly thing, and—well, look out! The Irish say it means you're going to die. The one who hears it first, he dies.

The night was very dark, with a low wind; the old girl sailing slowly on a gentle sea, with all sail set. "Back to bunk for me, you crazy Irish ass," said I. And then I heard it. We all heard, far away, a sort of moaning sound. And as we stood there wondering what it was, the carpenter, awakened by our voices, looked from his door.

"You blasted fools! It's just a block aloft as needs a grease dollop. Didn't ye ever hear a dry block groaning?"

Chink said: "It's whales, of course." And we all laughed. We never gave it any thought again. Not even Paddy did. He said: "I guess I was a fool, Bill!"

We stopped at Pitcairn and filled our bellies with its fruits again. We drove her toward the Horn. The mountain seas came rolling after her. The snowy albatross hovered above her rail. We met an outbound ship one howling day. Hove to, she was, our brave fair wind her head wind. We saw the seas go crashing over her, and pitied her crew. At dog-watch time that night we sang:

We've crossed the line, and the Gulf Stream,
Been down by Table Bay,
We've rounded the Horn and we're homeward-bound,
And that is the sailor's way.

And by and by, we came to the sunny seas and bright blue skies again.

I came down from the mast one day at noon, to go off duty. The mate's watch came on deck. The ship was still, upon a windless sea. No whitecap anywhere. No cloud in all the South Atlantic sky. Her sails hung drooping. High, high above her mastheads I could see a solitary marlinespike bird: a white bird with a long white tail feather. I just could hear its screaming. And far away a pod of whales was spouting. Entering the half-deck for my dinner, I met Paddy in the doorway. It was Sunday. He said, "My Harriet Lane is in your plate, Bill." And I said, "All right, Paddy. Thanks."

Chink and the farmer's son O'Brien and I sat wearily down to our dinner. We had been working hard all morning.

And suddenly there came a shrilling scream. All terror in it. And up we leaped and out we rushed before *"Man overboard"* had even ceased its ringing. The crew were racing for the boat. It wasn't necessary to stop the ship, for she was utter still on that limpid sea.

I sprang into the jigger-rigging and raced up, clear to the truck. That's what

one man must always do if anyone goes overboard by day. You go up there and thence direct the lifeboat toward the man who's in the sea. I looked all round the still blue limpid sea. The rowers in the boat looked up at me. The sea was empty. I heard that bird's faint scream. The whales were gone. And soon I said, cool as though it didn't matter in the least: "Another poor devil gone." Then down I came. The boat was in beside the ship, and they were hoisting her. And since I wasn't needed, I went to the half-deck to finish my Harriet Lane. And by the door I met with Chink. I asked: "Who was it?"

Chink said: "Paddy."

It didn't bother me at all at first. I ate his Harriet Lane and put my plate away. Then I walked forward to the hammock he'd risen from a little time ago. The dent of his head was in the pillow still. I laid my head there, and I went to sleep. And then—I wakened suddenly, and I was running from beneath the forecastle head; and in my ears there rang *"Man overboard!"* And that was how it was, for days: many times I'd wake, find myself running, that cry in my ears.

THAT evening in the dog-watch I sat alone, out on the rail, thinking of my chum. Polly came to me. "Come on, old chap. We're going to have a sing-song in the half-deck!" And how I hated him, and all my comrades! A sing-song, with Paddy being nibbled by the barracout! I turned away. Presently I noted that there was no singing. I rose and went to the half-deck. Chink, Polly, Tattersall, were poring over navigation books. The younger lads sat silent, smoking. Chink looked up, and, "Want a fill, old man?" he asked, and pushed his 'baccy-pouch toward me. And Polly fumbled in his pocket for a match. Tattersall said: "Curses! I can't get my giddy figures right tonight!" And then I knew—that they only thought to have a sing-song, thinking to cheer me up. So I sat down and filled my pipe and smoked. And no one spoke. The ship lay silent on the listless sea. The darkness hid her. Over her tall masts the stars shone bright. And by and by her bells clanged; the lookout-man cried:

"All's well, sir, and the lights are bright."

The mate replied: "All right."

Then I recalled my father's voice: *"You'll find it a hard life, my son."*

And then I went to the wheel, and stood there my two hours, and thought of Paddy. I seemed to see his smile, to hear him singing that Paradise Alley song. And somewhere far below me were the barracout. . . .

A wind blew up that night. The mate's watch took the royals off her. And when I came on duty soon after dawn, the wind was gone again. Only a little breeze was blowing. And presently the second mate sang out: "Loose the royals!" And when that order came, I was beside the foremast, alone, no other near me. And when an order comes, the man who's nearest to the rigging goes aloft to carry out that order. And so, from force of habit and of duty, I climbed into the fore rigging. And then it came to me that I was going to the place whence Paddy'd fallen. Somehow I climbed out along the thumb-thick footrope, out, and on out, till I was out above the waiting sea. I don't know how I loosed that royal, but I did it somehow. . . . Somehow I came down.

The ship sailed on, and we began to make her ready for her homecoming. The winds were fair and carried her along till, sixty miles north of the line, they left her one hot dawning. There was a long slow swell. All day she tumbled to it, her sails all slatting heavily against the spars and rigging. All night she tumbled to the long slow swell. And when another morning came, we clewed up all her sail, to save the canvas chafing; her white wings hung festooned along her spars. But later in the day the swell died down. The sea fell mirror-flat. The day passed, with decks too hot to walk on barefooted. The pitch came bubbling up from every deck seam. And all night long the ship lay motionless upon the mirror sea, a great round moon slow-passing o'er the sky. And all night long the tropic lightning played round the horizon. And when day came again, it was as yesterday. Next night was yesternight again. And on, and on, and on, the days and nights passed by. There came a day, when water was served out at four o'clock, the carpenter told the mate the water tank that he'd been drawing from was well-nigh empty. So next day we drew out water from the other tank. She had two tanks below, and they were full. We'd never drawn from it. And when he drew from it the carpenter took a swallow of the water. And then he swore and spat. "My God, the rats have

got into the tank," said he. And so, it seemed, they had. You could not drink the water. And so we must go back to the nigh-empty tank. Our water allowance was cut down to a bare minimum. We must go thirsty till a rain should come. There was no water now for morning coffee or for evening skilly. To save the precious water, the salt pork must be boiled in the pea soup, the salt horse in the bean soup. That made the soups too salt. We cut off buttons from our shirts and dungarees, and kept them in our mouths to keep saliva flowing. Morn after morn we scrubbed the long white decks. Eve upon eve, when the cruel sun was sunk beneath the mirror sea, we slopped sea water on her long white decks to cool and keep the seams tight. All day we worked out in the cruel sun. No shadow anywhere, because her sails hung all festooned along her lifeless spars. There was no dancing when the dog-watch came, no song. The hard-tack swarmed with fat white maggots. Night upon night we threw sea-water over one another, seeking coolness. But there was never any cooling from that hot tropic sea. On Sunday we dared not wash, nor shave, nor brush our teeth. Men grow quarrelsome in times like that.

Twenty-one days, twenty-one nights, the old girl lay becalmed. No flick of any breeze. Bodies were gaunt. Our lips began to swell. Our eyes were sullen, and our faces stubbly. Our hands were thick with paint, tar, and varnish. The Old Man's eyes were like a dog's eyes; a savage dog, almost too old for fighting.

AT dawn of the twenty-second day a long black cloud appeared along the western horizon. We fetched the rain sail up, and stretched it in the mizzen rigging, from side to side of her, and pushed its canvas hose down in the all but empty tank. We stripped off all our clothes, and gathered by her rail. Fourteen stark naked sailors, seven stark naked apprentices: dry-mouthed, voiceless, lips swollen.

We watched the cloud advance, a wall of solid black. We saw the rain fall in a solid sheet. Flying fish leaped in myriads at its foot. Dolphin, skipjack, bonito, albacore, and barracout leaped up to take them on the wing. Sea-birds dropped on them from above, wheeling, screaming. Then the Old Man spoke two words: *"Sheet home!"*

We grasped the long-idle sheets, and sheeted sail after sail home. No shouting on the ropes. We could not shout. The dry blocks groaned, the dry sails rustled.

WE lay upon the deck, outstretched, our mouths wide open. The rain beat down, poured on our naked bodies, streamed from the deck out to the hissing sea. And soon we laughed and jested. Naked, we slapped each other's naked buttocks, flat-handed, mirthfully. A light wind-puff came. The sails jerked full. The ship heeled far over, bubbles racing by. The mate said: "The Liverpool girls have got hold of the towline."

And from that day we held a bully breeze, and she ran finely. She ran beyond the northern tropic's edge, and came to the Sargasso Sea. And never once a wind that was not a fine hard wind. And so, because he hated to lose any time at all by taking even one small sail off her, the Old Man told the mate to leave the light fine-weather canvas on her still. Under her old worn sails, we drove her on toward the stormier seas. All day we sped through the Sargasso Sea, with clumps of amber weed in long, long lines stretching for mile on mile. We'd drop a hook and fetch a clump of weed up and lay it on the deck. And every clump was full of tiny crabs of wondrous coloring: red crabs, and green, and yellow. No larger than your thumb nail. And there were little twisty shellfish too. One sailor said: "By God, them weed bunches is like a sort o' mermaid mistletoe." Day after day we swept across that fairy sea.

And then one evening, just ere dusk, the wind fell suddenly, all in a tick. And all the air was utter still. And so the seas, hitherto driven on by that warm wind from the southwest, having now no force to push them, toppled, flopped up and down, confused and aimless. That is a curious thing to watch, one of the most curious things you find upon the sea. And then a great dark bank of cloud came sudden sweeping from the northwest, and before we could get a sail off, smote her. Down she went. But then her old worn sails began to split. So she came up again, and in a little while that wild wind from the north had stripped the old girl naked. Not a sail left, just shreds and ribbons streaming from her spars!

So all night long, working by full moonlight, we dragged her stout storm canvas from the locker, and hoisted it. When dawning came, we had her dressed, and under lower topsails in a hard full

gale. The combers raged. The sprays flew over her. The North Atlantic tried to imitate the Horn. It never can do that, but gives a fairish imitation. And then, when dawn was wide, a sailor shouted from the foremast, We ran. We stood beside the rail. And then we saw a ship pass by—and she was bottom up. Her bottom was not weedy. She was late from port. "Lost with all hands!" Capsized the previous night, when caught with too much stout sail upon her. It makes a sailor feel a little queer to see a thing like that.

When that gale died, we were well up, past the Azores. And then a clear wind came from the northeast, and that was not so good. For we must go northeast. Day after day, night after night, we tacked and tacked again; trying to claw up toward the channel. Then a mist set in, and from the southwest came a pleasant breeze. So off we went again. And in the mist close by, on that first day, we had a moment's glimpse of some tall ship's towering canvas. We did not see her shape. Next day we heard a foghorn blaring from close by. And then we heard another. And soon from all about us came a constant blaring. We answered with our own. That night the mist cleared off, and everywhere, ahead, astern, on either side, were homeward-hurrying clippers. All through the day we sailed amongst a homing fleet. Ship by ship we passed our rivals by. The whole sea echoed with the ships' bells striking. Night came down, and all the sea was dotted with the winking sidelights, green and red, and white stern lanterns. And all the night was musical with bells.

"All's well, sir, and the lights are bright!" we heard the lookouts cry.

DAWNING came, and we saw land ahead. We took the royals off her. And so we sailed in to Falmouth and let the anchor go.

Chink, Polly, Tattersall, and Douglas went to ask the Old Man for a reference. Their time was out. He gave them each the same:

> "This is to certify that the bearer has served his apprenticeship in the ship *Silberhorn* under my command. I have always found him attentive to his duties and strictly honest. I think he will make a good officer and it is with pleasure that I give him this recommendation."

And then, remembering the stores we'd swiped, we said, "By God, the Old Man's square!" Gay my old comrades were; but I, thinking of my next voyage with them all gone, was sad. There'd be green kids in place of them.

Oh, well! Just one more year! I'd stick it out somehow! Then *my* turn would come; I also would take my exam for second mate, and be an officer!

We sailed for Hull on the north seacoast one fair bright morning. Just ere we sailed, the *Chanaral* went out. We heard her crew all roaring out a queer French happy homeward chantey chorus, heaving their anchor in. We cheered her as she passed, and she cheered back. Then off we went, and saw again the white-washed cottages, set in the fair green fields. We saw the towns slip by, and lighthouses. And early in the night a wind came, yelling from southwest. The old girl leaped to it, the Old Man keeping her with full sail set. He said: "She knows she's going home, and she can stand it."

When we came into Hull, after a savage gale in the North Sea, that kept us all on deck through four long days and nights with scarce a wink of sleep, we heard about the pretty *Chanaral*. That squall that drove us flying up the channel had struck her on her way across to Nantes—had struck her not astern, as it struck us, but full upon her beam. She capsized and sank. Only her mate was saved. Well, that's the sailor's life.

I went to Aunt Clarissa's first. Fagged out I was, and limp, from that long North Sea gale. Ede was there, and Dolly. And they all saw how utter tired I was, and how dispirited. I didn't want to talk. I ate in silence while they waited on me. And then I said: "Please, may I go to bed?" The light was not yet gone. In clean white linen sheets I slept the clock round. I knew naught, nor dreamed any dream. A sailor, exhausted from the old fight with the sea. A lad, tired by life's puzzling struggle. And life yet scarce begun. When I wakened, Dolly stood by my bed with a cup of tea. "Thank you," I said.

Dolly said, "You're unhappy, dear."

"My chum was drowned," I answered.

She stooped and kissed my cheek. There was peace in her kiss, kiss of a comrade.

(One more voyage Bill Adams made. And then like his friend the mate Will Clegg, an illness overcame him on coming into port, and he was taken to a hospital. And there he got the explanation of that vertigo aloft against which he had so gallantly struggled.)

The doctor bade me strip, and for a long time set tubes at my chest and back, and listened; asking me many things about the sea and the life of a sailor. Then he bade me dress, and while I dressed talked aside with the chaplain. Then he sat down, face to face with me. And he said, "You can never go back to sea, my boy. Hard work of any sort would kill you; any sudden shock would be your death. Your heart's in a bad way, and your windpipes are choked with asthma. What you need is a long rest and good food."

"You can never go back to sea—"

Oh, well, I didn't hear the rest of what he said; I just sat staring at him, without really seeing him.

At last the chaplain's hand was on my arm, guiding me from the office, and the doctor was calling after me, "I'll see you tomorrow." And then the chaplain was telling me that the doctor owned a private hospital and that I was to go there as his guest till I was fit to be sent home. I didn't take any of it in. All I knew was that the ship was going to sea tomorrow, and that I was not going with her. . . .

A nurse gave me something to make me sleep. I woke late next morning and looked from the window opposite my bed out to Frisco Bay, with the sun bright on its green water. Shining in the sun, in full view, was my old girl, with her great silk ensign fluttering at her peak. Ahead of her was a tug-boat. And I knew that they were heaving her anchor in. And well, oh, very well, I knew the song that they were singing:

A-roving, a-roving,
Oh, roving's been my ruin,
We'll go no more a-roving with you,
fair maid!

Though forbidden to move, I sat erect in my bed till a hand touched my shoulder, and the nurse's voice said, "Come! You must lie down at once!" I turned to her, and she put into my hand a letter, at the same time pushing me down from my sitting posture.

"This is to certify that the bearer, B. M. Adams, has served his four-year apprenticeship in the ship *Silberhorn,* under my command. I have always found him strictly honest, sober and attentive to his duties. It is with pleasure that I recommend him as an excellent officer to any shipmaster."

There ends the yarn of a sailor. There were no more ships for me. . . .

Weary the days that I lay there, and lone beyond all telling.

I'd think of Dolly, see her at my bedside, soft-eyed in the midnight, her loose hair glossy in the candle's yellow light, reading from "Pilgrim's Progress" to a child frightened in the lone dark. Different to all other girls, she ever had been. No kiss as was her kiss. Always in her presence there had been peace, awareness of beauty. And I'd think then of the little red book that she had given me ere I sailed on my last voyage—my last voyage! "Read it when you're at sea," I'd hear her say.

When thou passest through the waters,
I will be with thee; and through the rivers,
they shall not overflow thee.

And I'd wish then that the ship had crashed, some black midnight, upon the stark rocks of Hermite.

NIGH forty years are gone since I lay there. Retired soon after I left him, the Old Man is dead long since; and lost with all hands, the *Silberhorn* lies on the bottom far out in mid-ocean. Ships are gone. The steamers have our sea.

I've told a sailor's yarn, plain and simple. Maybe some day I'll tell a landsman's tale, of what I found to do ashore; plain things and simple too. I've driven mules. *(Get up, Buck!)* Milked cows. *(Stand over, Bossie.)* Dug ditches, scattered seed of wheat and barley. *(Shine, pick. Sprout, seed!)* I've paved streets, laid sidewalks, mixing cement all day. Cleaned cesspools. Because I was a hobo with a blanket on my back, I've been in jail. *(Crawl, lice!)* Many other things I've been, and done.

And Dolly? Yes, I went back that spring to where the ragged robin and the meadow-sweet droop in the dawning's dew, and stayed a little while, till doctors bade me seek a sunnier clime if I would live. Then we came west together.

You hate, and learn to love. You curse, and learn to bless. . . .

Four years ago I buried Dolly upon a California hillside. Through thirty years we'd played the game together. Then, waking in the dark, I'd call her name. Lone man-child in the night, stunned, incredulous. I'll tell. maybe, some day, of those long thirty years.

"You'll find it a hard life, my son!"

But—who'd ask it easy?

THE END

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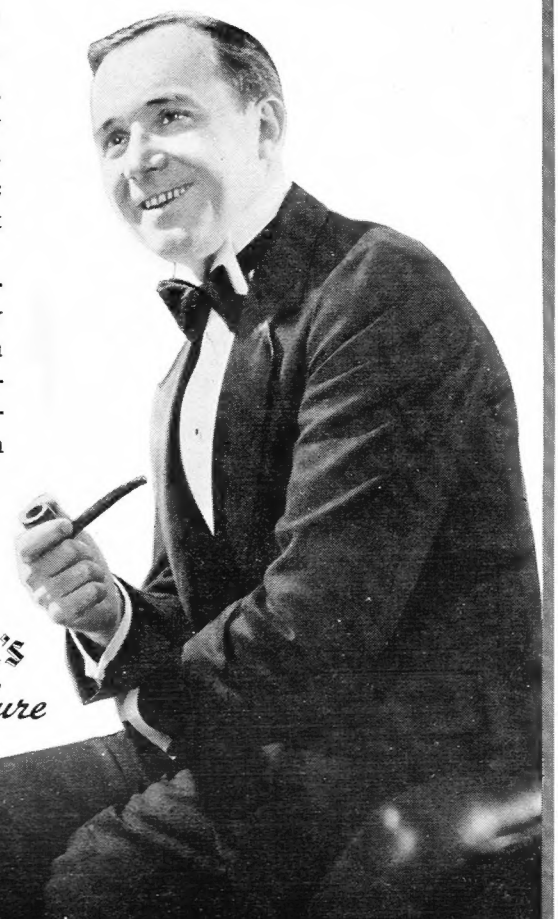

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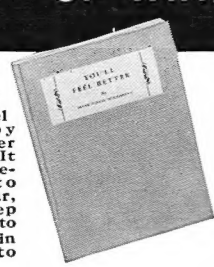

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